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BRIEF RECORDS

OF THE

CHURCH OF CHRIST,

OF THE

INDEPENDENT DENOMINATION,

AT SOUTHAMPTON,

FROM ITS ESTABLISHMENT TO THE PRESENT TIME:

ACCOMPANIED WITH OBSERVATIONS,
ARGUMENTATIVE AND EXPLANATORY, RESPECTING THE
PRINCIPLES ON WHICH IT IS FORMED,

BY T. ADKINS,

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH.

SOUTHAMPTON:

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To Miss Thring
with the Xtian love
of the author
Sept. 13. 1836

TO THE CHURCH AND CONGREGATION,

OF THE

INDEPENDENT DENOMINATION, AT SOUTHAMPTON,

THESE RECORDS ARE INSCRIBED,

BY THEIR

FAITHFUL AND AFFECTIONATE PASTOR,

T. ADKINS.

PREFACE.

This memorial owes its origin to the following circumstances. In the commencement of the present year, the church and congregation, of which these pages are the record, exerted themselves, with effect, to remove the unliquidated debt, resting on their place of worship. At a public meeting, that was held at the termination of this successful effort, a resolution was unanimously passed, soliciting the pastor to preach a sermon, which should embody some of the principal facts, connected with the history of this church. With a request, so reasonable in itself, and so cordial in the mode of its expression, he cheerfully complied. The desire that he should *preach* a sermon, was followed by another, equally unanimous, and similarly expressed, that he would commit it to the press. With this, also, and for the same reasons, the author

could not refuse compliance: nor, still further, could he accede to it, without the introduction of some additional remarks, of an explanatory and argumentative nature. This course of events, induced him, both to change the plan of the original composition, and to extend its limits, till it assumed the character and the size of the present publication. The opportunity, thus unsought on his part, and presented by the occurrences of Providence, the author has employed to exhibit those views of sacred polity, which, he firmly believes, are not only founded on the records of divine truth, but also conducive to its extension. In the necessary development of certain controverted points, he has aimed, so far as truth and duty would allow, at once to speak with honest plainness, as to what he deems the errors of those who differ from him, and to treat their characters as sacred, and their motives with respect. Hostility to error, and benevolence to him that errs, he considers, are, so far from being incompatible, that they absolutely spring from the same source. Both are comprehended in the precept, "thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any

wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him." As the indulgence of error on the subject of religion, is one of the most pernicious forms of evil, so, amidst the various modes in which the love involved in the preceding injunction should unfold itself, few can be more beneficial, though many, indeed, more agreeable than the attempt to remove its delusions, and exhibit truth. If, in aiming at this object, the author has unwittingly penned a sentence, which, either in statement, or in spirit, can inflict a *needless* wound, in the feelings of those who may differ from him he can only, thus publicly aver, that, on the discovery of the unpremeditated fault, he would willingly acknowledge it before the aggrieved brother, as he hopes he should before "the Judge of all."

There remains but one point to which the writer would refer, in the way of explanation. In the statements which he has made, respecting the presumed number of those, who, in sentiment, are dissidents from the protestant episcopal establishment, he perceives that he has expressed himself with some degree of ambiguity. The idea he intended to convey was,

that those of that class, in *Great Britain*, including, consequently, not only the numerous nonconformists in England and Wales—the Presbyterians of every order in Scotland, and the Roman Catholics and other dissenters in Ireland—constituted a decided majority: a conclusion to which he apprehends no reasonable objection can be made. He makes this remark to remove misapprehension respecting the import of his meaning, but not to favour the idea that this is a point of vital importance in the question at issue. That question is not one of figures, but of principles; and not to be determined by statistical calculations, but by an appeal to reason, enlightened by the word of God.

Prospect Place, Aug. 12, 1836.

BRIEF MEMORIALS,

&c.

CHAP. I.

Introductory remarks—Congregational church dated its origin from the time of the act of Uniformity—Terms of subscription made designedly severe—Objections to the Liturgy—Apostles Creed—Athanasian Creed—Prayer for the high court of Parliament—Character of Charles 2d—The office of public baptism—Burial service—Apocryphal writings—Oath of canonical obedience—Further objection to the act of Uniformity, as it interferes with the rights of conscience; makes the temporal magistrate a judge in spiritual subjects; and is constituted in obvious ignorance of the essential principles of the mental and moral constitution of man; consequently ineffectual. Concluding remarks on the effect produced by these persecutiug measures on the Nonconformists in the time of Charles 2d.

Whatever serves to illustrate the nature and confirm the truth of important principles should not be regarded with indifference. Facts, in themselves comparatively insignificant, may rise to a character

of dignity, by being the occasion of developing truths, momentous in their nature, and universal in their application. The attentive student of profane and sacred history will often be struck with the obvious disparity between the essential grandeur of the principle, involved in any event, or series of events, and the seeming littleness of the association with which it may be combined: and will find the need of perpetual caution lest the homage which his mind is compelled to yield to the one should be neutralised by a passing feeling of disrelish or contempt for the other. When great truths stand in obvious connexion with imposing splendour or authorative power, they secure involuntary respect: though, after a due analysis, it will generally be found that the veneration, thus produced, arises, in a great degree, from the accidental circumstances in which they are arrayed: and to the same extent it is deteriorated in its character. In proportion, however, as the mind is enlightened by genuine philosophy and regulated by scripture rules, it will sever, by a decisive glance, between what is merely adventitious and what is essential: and truth will be the object

of its homage, under whatever circumstances of apparent grandeur or insignificance, it may be unfolded to view.

The work of redemption serves, at once, to illustrate the import of these remarks, and to confirm their truth. Viewed in a superficial light it possesses little to recommend it to the attention of those, whose decisions are solely determined by accidental associations. It is the history of an individual, low in his earthly origin, destitute of worldly influence, who lived a life of poverty and died a death of shame: but in this narrative are embodied principles, the most extensive in their operation, and important in their results. An obscure part of this sinful earth became, thus, the theatre on which a Being, placed in a situation so apparently degraded, acted out truths, that relate to the universal government of God, and affect the destiny of all worlds.

On this account the history of a separate compartment of the universal church, which for one hundred and seventy-four years has, under the providence of God, existed in the town of Southampton, and that, too, under circumstances unfavourable to its growth,

or even duration, is not undeserving of attention. Since the commencement it has had, like the communities of the faithful in all ages, to contend with many opposing influences; the seducing power of worldly attraction to draw some members from its pale; the unjust civil disabilities under which the conscientious adherents have laboured;—the persecution arising from some opponents, and the honest but unfounded prejudices of others:—and in the midst of this possessing no worldly power to compel the refractory, no lures to seduce the avaricious,—no splendour to dazzle the proud;—the continued existence of this society, under such circumstances, is an instructive historical fact. To the pious dissenter the contemplation of it may evince the inextinguishable nature of those principles, in the belief of which his fathers lived, and for which they dared to die: in the conformist it may tend to produce respect for those principles, even where it does not afford plenary conviction of their truth: and if enemies, in this enlightened age, should exist, it may serve to mitigate the severity of hatred, and abate the superciliousness of pride.

The first authenticated memorial of this christian society, or church, as in conformity with the scriptural designation it may be called, commence at that period which has justly been called black Bartholomew day;* when two thousand ministers of Jesus Christ in this country, and in one day, quitted their livings to retain their consciences; casting themselves and their families afloat, on the tide of divine providence, without any apparent means of support. A sublime spectacle to angels and to men!

The victims of this arbitrary measure were, for the greater part, eminent for their learning and their piety. Of the former, the works which they have left are the most convincing proof; in which it is difficult to determine whether vigour of intellect, extent of erudition, or patience of labour, is more apparent: whilst of their piety the sacrifices which they made, rather than violate their allegiance to Christ, afford unequivocal evidence. It is, however, a most important fact in the history of these men, of whom the world was not worthy, and to whom,

* Sept. 5, old style, designated in the almanack as St. Bartholomew's day.

under providence, more than to any other agency, the prosperity of this country both in a political and religious point of view is to be ascribed; that, during more than twenty-six years of suffering, their enemies were never gratified by being able to provoke them to resistance, nor, amidst the most precarious means of support, was one of them imprisoned for debt.

The Rev. Nathaniel Robinson, who at the time referred to, was the rector of All Saints, in this town, was, with the Rev. Giles Say of St. Michael's, first ejected and then imprisoned for his nonconformity: the former became the first pastor of this church.

The act of uniformity, by which these devoted men were driven from their sphere of labour, and which is still enforced, was justly considered, by those who suffered from its effects, as utterly indefensible, on any principle of reason or religion; for the terms of compliance were vexatious and severe. It has sometimes been observed that, however eminent might be the *piety* of these men, their consciences must have been more scrupulous than enlightened, other-

wise to avoid the imposition of requirements so unimportant, they would not have made so vast a sacrifice. The objection, however, like a sword wielded by an unskilful hand, falls in the wrong place: for, if the terms of conformity were so lenient, as some have represented them to be, to enforce them by the penal severities which were then inflicted, was alike impolitic and unjust. Plausible however, as it is, it is not founded in truth. The act of uniformity was an engine of state, fabricated between the king, his favourites, and the ecclesiastical dignitaries; and by the latter in particular, was designedly made so strict, that those, whose views of sacred polity did not comport with their own, might be compelled to perjure themselves, or be cast out of the church. As a proof of the truth of this, Dr. Sheldon, then bishop of London, who was one of the commission for revising the liturgy, and who as is affirmed by bishop Burnet "seemed not to have any sense of religion, if any religion at all; and spoke of it, most commonly, as of an engine of government and a matter of policy;" hearing a nobleman express some regret that the

door was so strait that many sober-minded ministers could not have admission; replied, "It is no pity at all: if we had thought that so many of them would have conformed we would have made it straiter."

That this subject may be distinctly placed before the eye of the reader it is necessary to refer first, to the terms of subscription, and secondly, to the points to which the candidate for orders was required to subscribe. These are but little known and less observed, though a clear understanding of them is of great importance, in deciding the question that existed then, and exists now, between the respective parties.

It was enacted that no person shall obtain ordination within the pale of the established church excepting he shall first subscribe the thirty-nine articles: and in addition to them the three articles here subjoined.

I.—"That the king's majesty, under God, is the only supreme governor of this realm, and of all other his highness's dominions and countries, as well in all *spiritual* or *ecclesiastical* things, or causes, as temporal; and that no foreign prince, person, prelate,

state, or potentate, hath, or ought to have, any jurisdiction, power, superiority, preeminence, or authority, ecclesiastical or spiritual, within his majesty's said realms, dominions, and countries.

II.—" That the book of common prayer, and of ordering of bishops, priests, and deacons, containeth in it nothing contrary to the word of God, and that it may lawfully be used, and that he himself will use the form, in the said book, presented in public prayer, and administration of the sacraments, and no other.

III.—" That he alloweth the book of articles of religion, agreed upon by the archbishop and bishops of both provinces, and the whole clergy, in the convocation, holden at London, in the year 1562, and that he acknowledgeth all and every the articles contained, being in number 39, besides the ratification, to be agreeable to the Word of God.

" And for the avoiding of all ambiguities, such person shall subscribe in this form, and order of words; setting down both his christian and surname, viz. I. N. N. do willingly and *ex animo* subscribe to these three articles, above mentioned, and to all things that are contained in them."

These are the terms of ministerial conformity prescribed as a necessary qualification for officiating within the pale of the established church: and in order to judge of the merits of the controversy the nature of them should be carefully weighed. Every minister must subscribe to the declaration that the book of common prayer contains in it *nothing contrary* to the Word of God: of course it is a point of absolute necessity that every part of it should be distinctly known to him that makes the subscription, and faithfully compared with the inspired records; lest, in yielding to the requirement, he should set his hand to an untruth. The act, still further, exacts a solemn declaration of unfeigned assent and consent to all and every thing contained in the book of common prayer. Terms can hardly be conceived more rigid; and, as they are to be subscribed, *ex animo*, no privilege of doubt, no mental reservation, can possibly be allowed. Should there, consequently, exist a single item in that compilation, which, in the estimation of the candidate for orders, is opposed to the Word of God, or which is even *suspected* to be thus opposed, it does appear obvious that, by sub-

scription, under such circumstances, he would commit a serious offence against his own conscience and the sacred majesty of truth. Should he, even, after subscription, be led to suspect the error of any part, he is a dissenter in principle; and, continuing in his office, under this impression, it may fairly be demanded, how he can exonerate himself from the serious charge of insincerity?

The requisition, thus made, on the behalf of the book of common prayer, was justly considered as equally profane in its nature, and litigious in its effects. Had it been demanded in reference to the inspired volume, compliance would have been a reasonable act; but when it related to a book of human composition, and the requirement was of a nature so extraordinary, that a greater could hardly be exacted for, even, the word of God; it was, obviously, the imperative duty of every one, ere he yielded compliance, to try it by the severest test. Amidst much, in this compilation, that must command our veneration, there is also, much to which, surely, every enlightened, serious, and conscientious mind must object. It contains scriptures genuine

and apocryphal:—it enjoins ceremonies incompatible with the simplicity of christian worship as exemplified in the New Testament; and teaches doctrines, in language scarcely to be misapprehended, opposed to the verities of the inspired volume. It would not comport with the design of the writer to adduce *all* that might be said in support of these allegations, but he would entreat every reader, candidly and sincerely, to consider the following points.

Even the apostle's creed, a formulary of great antiquity, and, in many respects, deserving of high veneration, contains a doctrine to which, surely a reflecting mind must hesitate ere it can subscribe: since it expressly asserts, that Christ *actually* descended into hell. Not all the learning and ingenuity of Bishop Pearson can give a satisfactory explanation of this bold and hazardous expression, to the truth of which, nevertheless, every candidate for orders is required, *ex animo,* to subscribe.

However firmly an individual may believe in the doctrine of the blessed trinity, when the subjects involved in it are expressed in the language of inspiration, yet who can approve of the statement, in

reference to it, contained in the Athanasian creed: a creed which attempts a human explanation of an incomprehensible subject, and makes, not only the doctrine itself, but the *modus* of its representation, so binding on the consciences of men, that, without a firm belief in both, "they shall without doubt perish everlastingly," yet to the truth of this statement every candidate for orders is required to subscribe.

In the prayer for the high court of parliament, the supreme head of the temporal government is designated the "most gracious and most religious" king. This expression was devised by the clergy, in convocation, in 1661, and was made to refer, in the first instance, to the licentious Charles the second. It is no infringement of charity to aver that he was one of the most profligate of men. His court was a scene of debauchery, in which religion, by every species of ribaldry and buffoonery, was held up to ridicule and contempt. The prime actor in this scene, at the time when he received this incense of fulsome flattery, was living in a state of almost unrestrained licentiousness: and, as we are informed

by Bishop Burnet, " usually came from his mistress's lodgings to church, even on sacrament days."

Well might the same author observe that " on its first coming out it gave great offence and occasioned much indecent raillery:" in addition to which he has justly remarked " It is not easy to give a proper sense to this, and to make it go well down; since whatever the signification of *religious* might be in the latin word, as importing the sacredness of the king's person, yet in the English language it bore a signification that was, no way, applicable to the king."

The subjoined picture, drawn by the hand of one, who was an eye witness of the scene, who was both a courtier and a cavalier, and who, not only from his political predilections, but, also, from his unquestionable christian integrity, cannot be suspected of exaggeration, is such as must make every serious mind shudder with horror; and evince, beyond all power of refutation, the impiety of the expression to which a reference has been made. " I can never forget the inexpressible luxury and profaneness, gaming, and all dissoluteness, and, as it were, total

forgetfulness of God, it being sunday evening, which this day sen'night I was witness of: the king sitting and toying with his concubines, Portsmouth, Cleaveland, and Mazarine, &c. and a French boy singing love songs, in that glorious gallery, whilst about twenty of the great courtiers, and other dissolute persons, were at basset round a large table, a bank, of at least, two thousand pounds in gold before them, upon which two gentlemen who were with me made reflections with astonishment! Six days after was all in the dust."*

The death of this man was an appropriate sequel to his life. He maintained his habits of duplicity to the last; and there is little doubt that, notwithstanding all his professed zeal for the protestant establishment of this country, he died in the faith of the church of Rome; having received the consecrated wafer, and supreme unction, from Hudlestone, a popish priest. His unrepented libertinism remained, also, to the close. Lady Portsmouth, " sat in his bed, taking care of him, as a wife of

* Evelyn's Memoirs. Vol. iii. 137.

a husband." He recommended her again and again to the care of his successor, also her son by him—his other illegitimate children, and concluded this list of recommendations by referring to one mistress of sufficient notoriety in the following words "let not poor Nelly starve:" but of his wife—his people—his servants—his debts (though he left behind him nearly ninety thousand guineas gathered out of the privy purse)—of religion—of his sins—his soul—he spake not one word! Bishop Kenn, indeed, offered him absolution, and pronounced it over him, though the king "expressed no sense of sorrow for his past life nor any purpose of amendment:"* a fearful proof, in the case of this prelate, of the injurious tendency of a mere state religion, upon, even, a virtuous mind. Thus died Charles the Second, and perhaps, on the surface of the globe, there was not passing, at that moment, a direr tragedy than ocurred in the chamber where that man breathed his last, in reference to whom this expression, scarcely less than impious, was originally employed.

* Burnet.

This, also, is required to be used, in reference to the supreme magistrate, down to the present time: to the truth of which, without regard to the personal character of those to whom it relates, every candidate for orders must subscribe from his heart!

The office of public baptism teaches, in terms which appear to be as explicit as can be employed, that, by the mere ritual administration of this ordinance the child is actually regenerated; that is, as the catechumens are subsequently taught to repeat, "are made members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven." In conformity with this view the officiating minister, in addressing the sponsors after the administration of the ordinance, declares the child to be regenerate; and in the form of prayer prescribed for the occasion is required to say "We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to regenerate this infant by thy holy spirit." In consequence of this view a large portion of the established clergy are silent on the subject of an inward change, evinced by its outward fruits; acknowledging no other regeneration than that which was effected in baptism.

In this belief, whilst they are *argumentatively* right, as churchmen, they are *theologically* wrong, as professed ministers of Christ; fostering, as must thus be done, a pernicious error, in the credulous consciences of their hearers, from the deluding effects of which, it is seriously to be apprehended, that multitudes are deceived to their ruin. On the other side a considerable number of the clergy, convinced of the unscriptural character and injurious tendency of these views, insist on the necessity of a subsequent renovation, by the influence of the spirit of God. Of these it may be said that the converse of the proposition is true, and that whilst, as divines, they are *theologically* right, as *churchmen*, they are *argumentatively* wrong. Thus may be seen the glaring fact of two parties, both of whom have subscribed *ex animo* to the same articles of faith, but who are, nevertheless arrayed, in unyielding hostility against each other, on a question of vital importance.* Irrespective

* An evangelical expositor of the thirty-nine articles, who has recently presented the result of his reflections to the world, observes, in reference to this service, that the church, in the full assurance of faith, that, "Whatsoever we shall ask in prayer believing we shall receive," is justified in the

therefore of the unwarrantable institution of sponsors in this ordinance who promise and vow, both for themselves and the infant, what neither is likely to perform, the very terms in which the service is expressed afford a valid reason for nonconformity.

Beautiful and impressive as is the burial service, when pronounced over the remains of one, with whose previous character it comports, yet is not the almost *indiscriminate* use of it liable to great objec-

expression which is here employed. But it may be asked is not this egregious trifling, trifling so much the more to be deplored as it endangers the interest of immortal souls? The "full assurance of faith" required by the sacred scriptures relates to what God himself has declared; and not to our personal interest in those subjects respecting which the declaration is made: on the former we cannot place too much confidence; on the latter we cannot exercise too much caution: hence the same authority declares, "he that believes not hath made him a liar," enjoins "examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith or not; prove your own selves." To take that for granted, on the subject of salvation, which requires to be proved, is not the full assurance of *faith;* but the full assurance of *presumption;* which, by binding a delusion on the souls of men, is accessary to their ruin. In addition to which it may fairly be demanded, in what part of the records of eternal truth, has God declared that baptism, administered by the hands of an episcopally ordained minister, be he pious or profane, is attended with, or followed by, real regeneration of heart.

tion, and productive of deplorable effects? It was evidently designed for those who, in scripture, are designated *saints;* and who die in the Lord. The church speaks of the departed as a "*dear brother:*" declares that God of *his mercy* has taken *his soul* to himself: commits his body to the grave in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life: and gives *hearty thanks* that it hath pleased God to deliver him out of the miseries of this sinful world. This service, however, the officiating minister is required to use, over all who are brought to him for interment; without regard to their previous character or state of mind:—without discriminating, whether they were believers or unbelievers,—regenerate or unregenerate,—moral or profane: provided they were not excommunicate, suicides, or unbaptised. So solemn a mockery, at the mouth of the grave, must surely be offensive to God: tend to harden the impenitent spectators in their sinful courses of life; and to expose the services of religion to contempt. To this service every candidate for ordination is made *ex animo* to subscribe.

The terms of subscription require that all com-

municants should receive the Lord's supper in a kneeling posture: a practice that was never known till the doctrine of transubstantiation, or the actual change of the material parts of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, arose in the church of Rome. The insisting on it as a term of communion is an infringement of liberty of conscience, to which, nevertheless, every candidate for orders must subscribe.

The act, still further, required that parts of the apocryphal writings should be read, publicly, in connexion with the volume of inspiration, and classes both under the same general title of the "holy scriptures." Thus the stories of Bel and the Dragon, Tobit and his dog, palpably riduculous, and proved to be spurious, are placed on the same level with the holy Word of God. With this regulation every candidate for orders must promise to comply!

The terms of subscription require the candidate to take the oath of canonical obedience, and to swear subjection to his ordinary according to the canons of the church. A slight acquaintance with those canons will serve to ascertain, that there are in them some

things so oppressive and others so absurd, that, whilst the requirement, itself, is an infringement on christian liberty, compliance with it would seem to be at the expense of sincerity and truth. If to these be added the objections derived from expressions in the office of the absolution of the sick: and the marriage ceremony: the numerous and unprofitable repetitions in the liturgy:—the ceremonies, some superstitious and others unmeaning, which, in different parts of the service, are enjoined: it will appear, I presume, to every candid reader that the book of common prayer is not what the terms of subscription evidently presuppose and absolutely require, that in the judgment of the candidate it should be immaculate in purity and infallible in truth.

In specifying these objections, the number of which might easily be increased, the writer is not conscious that he has, in a single instance, or to the least extent, over-stated or misrepresented the truth: and again requests the reader to place them by the side of the terms of subscription, which demand from the candidate "an unfeigned assent and consent to all and every thing contained in the book of common prayer:"

also his firm belief that it "containeth nothing in it contrary to the Word of God," and when he has placed them in this juxta position, and diligently compared the one with the other, to ask himself solemnly, and in the presence of the all-seeing God, if he believe that there is any force in the objections which have been stated, how can the declaration of conformity be made? Admitting, for the sake of argument, that some, or even the greater number, of these objections could be explained away; yet if but ONE remained, and the terms of subscription retain their present rigid form, that *one* objection, existing in the mind of the subscriber, would, as *really* compromise the principle of sincerity as though no part had been removed. That many have subscribed, many whom we love and revere, and from whose characters we are bound to believe that they have done it in sincerity and truth, is no reply to the objection. We have not to do, on this point, with men but with principles: and, at least, it may be presumed that enough has been said to justify the nonconformists of past and present times in seceding from the established church: to evince that they have not been impelled in that act by

a spirit of faction but by a love of truth: and that it should rather be a subject of astonishment that intolerance could exact such terms of conformity than that christian firmness should refuse to comply. With great propriety, therefore, it was remarked, at the time that the act was passed, by a person of eminence, and who was no dissenter, "Had all the ministers conformed, people would have thought that there was nothing in religion; and that it was only a thing to be talked of in the pulpit, and serve a state design; whilst the ministers turned and changed any way with the state."

Allowing, however, that the book of common prayer had been purified from those blots, which so evidently deform its appearance, the act of uniformity was *unjustifiable*, as it was an impious interference with the sacred rights of conscience. Though the constitution of society is a mutual compact, in which men surrender a portion of their natural rights to receive a greater good in return; yet, there are some of these which cannot be resigned, since the sacrifice of them would be at an expense, which no social benefits could repay: they are those of conscience

and of private judgment. The idea of moral responsibility is necessarily associated with the exercise of these; and as our accountableness to the tribunal of God can never be annihilated, so these rights can never be resigned. Conscience dwells in her own sanctuary; a retreat so holy that into it no unhallowed step should dare to intrude; she utters her mandates in low but awful accents, and they do but echo the commands of heaven. If, therefore, the civil magistrate presume to interfere with her decisions; and, in reference to those who in *temporal* matters yield due allegiance to the secular authority, as was the case with the nonconformists, he steps beyond his sphere; foregoing his proper character, as an earthly ruler, he invades the prerogative of God. The secular government, therefore, in enforcing by pains and penalties the adoption of sentiments and the observance of ceremonies, unsanctioned by the authority of the sole standard of the protestant reformation in the holy scriptures, inflicted a serious wound on the sacred rights of conscience.

The act was, still further, unjustifiable, as it constituted the temporal magistrate a judge in matters

of religious belief. This is a practice which, in numberless instances, has been productive of the most fearful results: for, on the assumption that the creed which was enjoined was true, it required not the weight of human authority to lodge it in the judgment andco nscience; but, presuming that it was false, how fearful is the responsibility which the magistrate, and they who have abetted his proceedings, incur. In almost every age some important changes have been effected in national forms of faith: and, as though truth were to be measured by lines of geographical demarcation, that which, in one country, has been established as infallibly true, in another has been denounced as false. Even in the same country, the lapse of a few years has seen systems, essentially opposed to each other, alternately rise and fall; whilst the successive governments, steady to their purpose, have enforced, by penalties and privations, a rigid conformity to each. Nay, in one empire, and at one time; that empire *Britain*, that time the *present;* may be seen the anomalous spectacle of three distinct systems, episcopacy in England, presbyterianism in Scotland, popery in

Canada, all supported by the same secular arm; and the distinctive peculiarities of each maintained by legal power. The points of difference between these systems must be important, or unimportant: if the latter, then where is the justice of enforcing, by civil penalties, subjects confessedly of such a nature; but if, on the other hand, they are *important*, then all cannot be *true;* since they are directly opposed to each other. And, as the prescribed formulary of faith can, alone, be available to salvation, whilst it is based in truth, and corresponds with the Word of God, how awful must be the responsibility of those who enforce, by sanctions of human authority, a creed unfounded in truth. Can governments, can ecclesiastics, can any that enforce such claims, place themselves in an attitude of delegated accountableness between the deluded victims of error and the tribunal of God. Surely all thus implicated should beware, lest, in attempting to invest error with the authority of truth, they become chargeable with the "blood of souls!"

Between an entire prostration of the intellect to an earthly tribunal, and nonconformity, there appears

to be no intermediate *defensible* position: and if it be asserted to be culpable to resist all or any interference with the sacred rights of conscience and of private judgment, the objector is bound, on his own principles, to submit, *without enquiry*, to all the dogmas which perverted ingenuity may invent or intolerance may enforce: to be a presbyterian in Scotland, an episcopalian in England, a papist in Canada; or, even, a believer in Mahomet, under the Sublime Porte. It is no answer to this statement, that the individual is bound to comply, only, in matters of truth: since this reply not only assumes the exercise of the principle in question, the right of private judgment, so as to determine what is truth; but it supposes, what is indeed absurd, that something more is required to enforce it, than the dictates of conscience and the authority of God. In one word, the fact is, as the eminent Robert Hall has most fairly stated it, "When a nation forms a government, it is not wisdom, but power, which they place in the hand of the magistrate; from whence it follows his concern is only with those objects which power can operate upon. But an attempt to dis-

tinguish truth from error, and to countenance one set of opinions to the prejudice of another, is to apply power in a manner mischievous and absurd."

The act of uniformity was unjustifiable as it evinced the grossest ignorance of the human mind, and of the laws by which it is governed. The mind of man, from its very nature, is utterly incapable of yielding its convictions, excepting to the force of truth itself. Proscription, persecutions, penalties, in any, or every form, can never bring an erring mortal to abandon his own system, or to assent to the truth of ours. They may make, and often have made, men to be hypocrites: and where the mind does not possess sufficient fortitude to brave the impending terrors, there may be a hollow assent to the truth of any proposition, to which, after all, the secret convictions of the heart may give the lie. A mighty accession forsooth it must be to any cause, to obtain those, who, by threats or by lures, are brought to profess a creed which they do not believe, and to practice forms from which their minds revolt! What reliance could be placed upon men, who could thus make a gain of godliness? Having violated

their consciences in matters of eternal moment, it is folly to expect that they would listen to them in those of a temporal nature! Such is the legitimate tendency of civil coercion in spiritual things on weak or unprincipled minds; what, in the mean time, must be the effect of such measures on an upright man? Having adopted his sentiments, as the result of deliberate enquiry and conscientious approval, "he holds fast his integrity and will not let it go." Should the civil magistrate call to his aid fines, penalties, and even death itself; the mind of such a man looks with calm intrepedity upon the gathering storm. To every remonstrance which may be urged from the love of ease, the dread of human displeasure, or, even, the fear of death, he replies, "Whether it be right in the sight of God, to obey you rather than God, judge ye." Holding, as he does, his convictions with a firmness not to be bent, and a courage not to be appalled, his enemies are defeated, even though he perish in the contest: and they create a martyr where they intended a victim. "Personal sufferings," says the Honorable Mr. Boyle, "which a well-meaning man undergoes for his conscience, are

but such a burden to his mind as feathers to an eagle; they have some weight in themselves; but in the situation in which they are placed about him, they enable him to soar towards heaven, and to reach a height from whence he excites the astonishment of beholders and defies their rage." Such was the effect upon the holy men to whom we have already referred. Never should it be forgotten that mind alone can come into contact with mind, truth alone can expel error; and that, if men do err in matters of religion, it is not by the sword of the civil magistrate that they can be reclaimed, but by the force of moral reason; by arguments addressed to the understanding, and motives applied to the will.

The writer has extended these observations, on the act of uniformity, to some length, not only as a defence of those holy men who thus refused to submit to its exactions; but on account of the reference which they sustain to the question of protestant dissent, as it exists at the present day. The terms of conformity, unrelaxed in their rigour, exist now as they did then; and there is not an argument which can be adduced to justify the conduct of these

two thousand worthies, which does not still apply to dissenters, with undiminished force. If the former were right, the latter cannot be in the wrong. If *they* stood forth in the defence of those great principles of civil and religious liberty, which are identified with the best interests of their native land and the eternal well-being of man, *these* do the same. If *they* deserve the praise of this country and the gratitude of every succeeding age, then it is equally unpatriotic and ungrateful to attempt to hold up the legitimate inheritors of their principles to obloquy and scorn.

The sufferings to which those holy men, thus ejected, were exposed, were most cruel and unjust. An account of them may be found in "Calamy's Nonconformist's Memorial;" "The Conformist's Plea for the Nonconformists;" "The Life of Philip Henry, by Matthew Henry, his Son;" "Orme's Life of Baxter." It ought, however, to be added, that from the time when the act of conformity was passed to the granting of toleration, in 1688, a period of twenty-six years, these devoted servants of Christ were hunted as partridges on the mountains; and

were considered as fair game for ignorance, impiety, and bigotry to worry down. Such men as Bates, Baxter, Flavel, Philip Henry, Owen, and Howe, were condemned to obscurity and to silence, under the impending penalties of imprisonment, banishment, or death. Even the ordinary intercourse of christian fellowship was denied to them; so that when Baxter and Bates were requested to meet at the house of a friend, to pray for the recovery of his wife, who lay dangerously ill, two justices of peace came, with a sergeant at arms, to seize them; searching, even the sick chamber for their prey, who escaped only by their being providentially prevented by some unexpected occurrence from fulfiling their engagement. These restrictions were imposed at a time when many of the pulpits of the established church were, either defectivly supplied, or not supplied at all: and when, also, the ignorance and vice of the community at large required every effort to diminish them. Of the comparative degree of zeal and devotedness that distinguished those who conformed and those who declined conformity, the following fact may be adduced as an evidence. In

the year 1665 occurred, in the metropolis of this country, that dreadful scourge of Providence, called the plague. Above a hundred thousand of its inhabitants were swept away by its ravages, and about ten thousand in one week. At that awful crisis many of the newly conforming clergy of the city churches fled, leaving their flocks, in their utmost need, without a pastor to comfort them in their terrors, or to prepare them for an eternal world. It was at that juncture that the love of Christ and compassion for the souls of men, outweighed, in the minds of the silent sufferers, the terrors arising from the penalties of the law, and the "pestilence that walketh in darkness;" and induced many of them to come from their retreats to ascend the vacated pulpits; standing there, like the high priest of Israel, with the censor of incense in their hands, in the sublime attitude, of intreaty or intercession between the living and the dead! What wonder that such instances of devotedness should lodge a testimony in the consciences of the spectators; produce an invincible attachment to the persons and principles of those who practised them; and lay

the foundation of churches, in the metropolis, which exist to the present day!

The conventicle act, to which during this period they were subject, enacted that if any persons, above the age of sixteen years, should be present at any meeting for worship, different from the Church of England, where there should be five persons more than the household, they should, for the first offence, suffer three months' imprisoment, or pay five pounds; for the second, the punishment was to be doubled; and for the third, they should be banished to the American plantations, from whence, if they returned, without permission, they were to suffer death. The oath of a common spy or informer was sufficient to secure the infliction of this penalty. By another act they were prohibited from coming within five miles of any corporate town, where they formerly preached, or from keeping schools or taking boarders under a penalty of forty pounds: such, with greater or less aggravations, continued to be their oppressed condition, till the abdication of James the Second, when the baleful and waning power of the Stuarts set for ever, and the star of Brunswick arose on our political

horizon. The introduction of these facts appeared to be necessary to explain to the general reader the import of several transactions referred to in the narrative subjoined.*

* It has been customary to state as an apology for the intolerant proceedings adopted in reference to these servants of God, that a spirit of persecution characterized the times in which they lived; in the guilt of which all parties were involved:—and that as the episcopal clergy had, during the protectorate of Cromwell, been visited with the infliction of penalties on their part, therefore, this was only a righteous retribution of providence. In reply to these remarks it may be observed, that the injuries which the Episcopalians, endured, bore no comparison, in point of severity, with those of the nonconformists, as could easily be proved:—that with the persecuted of that party, as much as with those of every other, the Independent feels himself compelled to sympathize: and execrates with no less severity the abused power of a Cromwell than that of Charles the Second—and, that, especially, whatever might be the spirit of persecution which characterized the age in question, from the crime of participating in it, the Independents, as a body, must be exonerated: the author feels himself constrained to adduce, in confirmation, the remarks which he has made on this subject on another occasion. *The Independents were the first, as a sect, in this country, to discover and to recognize, to their full extent, the sacred rights of conscience.* Hazardous as this assertion may appear, the writer does not make it unadvisedly; and he is prepared to support it by corresponding evidence. At the period to which a reference has been made, the rights of conscience were little known and less

practised. The Presbyterians were as tenacious of civil power as the Episcopalians: and were as desirous to invest the "*jus divinum*" of their body with this honour, as the others were to place the tiara of glory on the brow of episcopacy. Amidst these conflicting sentiments, it was to the honour of the Independents to unravel the web of sophistry; and to avow a principle which anticipated the opinion of ages yet to come. Repelling all coercion from themselves, they assigned to others the same privileges which they claimed: their principles and their conduct accorded, and the rights which they advocated when they were under oppression, they practised when they came into power. On this subject, though the writer could produce a diversity of irrefragable proofs, he prefers to select those which, to every candid churchman, at least, will not be without their weight. These testimonies will, he sincerely hopes, abate somewhat of the asperity which from certain quarters has been evinced to that body of christians, by proving that they are entitled to the respect and gratitude of all who love the principles of our admirable constitution, and rejoice in the prosperity of their country.

The first authority is from the pen of a clergyman of the established church.

"At the restoration," says the Rev. Johnson Grant, in his History of the English Church and Sects, "fell ultimately the power of the Independents. With their management of civil matters I shall not concern myself, but all the world will allow that, in point of religious liberty, their conduct, when in power, (and would that the same could be averred of all other religious bodies,) fulfilled the promises which they made when in obscurity. They exhibit a noble and memorable example of a sect, who in possessing the citadel of establishment, forgot and forgave the injuries they had sustained; abused not their authority by the oppression of

their brethren, and were content to hold the second place, prefering others before themselves in honour and emolument."

To the same purport is the testimony of the editor of the Memoirs of Colonel Hutchinson, himself a clergyman of the established church. "The Independents to whose party, if a man of so much candour and liberality can be said to be of any party, he belonged, proceeded upon that principle, which, how general soever it ought to be, is however unfortunately very uncommon, of allowing to all that liberty of conscience they demanded for themselves. Accordingly they began by desiring only an act to be passed "for taking away all coercive power, authority, and jurisdiction, from bishops, extending to civil penalties," &c. It was not till after they saw the extreme pertinaciousness of the King to retain the bishops as instruments at a future opportunity of remounting his system of arbitrary sway, and that 'the prelatical party about him prevailed with him to refuse an accommodation, and hazard his crown and life, rather than diminish their greatness and power to persecute others,' that they insisted on the abolition of the order. It was quite a different party, that of the rigid Presbyterians, and peculiarly their ministers, 'who cried out against the tyranny of the bishops only that they might get the power into their own hands, and, without the name, might exercise the authority of popes.' *That, instead of this power being irrevocably and immoveably established over us, we are now governed by the mildest church discipline in the universe, we owe to these Independents!"—See Introduction to Colonel Hutchinson's Memoirs. Page* 17.

Nor less decisive is the testimony of Mr. Brodie, the learned author of the History of the British Empire, from the accession of Charles I. to the Restoration.

"The grand principle by which the Independents sur-

passed all other sects, was universal toleration to all denominations of Christians whose religion was not conceived to be hostile to the peace of the state—a principle to which they were faithful in the height of power as well as under persecution. In this, for which they were bitterly reviled by the Presbyterians, they set an example to Christendom; for, though a secret toleration to a certain extent, or rather a connivance at certain sects, had been allowed in the United Provinces, it was on far less liberal principles, and denounced by the clergy as most sinful in the magistracy. It is true that the Independents did not extend the principle of toleration to the Catholics, but the exception was founded on political grounds only; that the Catholic body acknowledging a foreign spiritual dominion, and holding correspondence, not only with it, but with an organized clergy throughout Europe, and through them with the civil powers, were dangerous to the peace of a protestant community. This noble principle of the Independents has been, by men who could trace no good in the adherents of a party that opposed the illegal pretensions of a court, deduced from the excess of their enthusiasm; but it owed its origin to better motives. An interested, ambitious clergy, regularly organized throughout a state, are intolerant, because they suppose their own consequence is involved in the struggle. With the community at large, who in many instances resign their understandings to their spiritual guides, civil interests, also, too often mingle with religious, and the priesthood are ever ready to sound the alarm: but when the great body of the people think for themselves, and no longer dread the civil consequences of difference in opinion, while they have no organized clergy to sound the toscin on every appearance of heresy, they become imbued with all the genuine charity of the gospel. The clergy unorganised into a regular government, and each devoted to the duties of his own parish, have

neither power nor inclination to concert measures against the opinions of their neighbours, provided they do not threaten their own security. They do indeed pity the delusions of the rest of mankind; but they would correct them by opening their eyes to the light, not by consigning to the flames those whom they cannot convert by their arguments."—*See Brodie's British Empire, vol. iii. page* 517—519.

The author trusts he shall be pardoned if he gratifies his own feelings by adducing the testimony of Lord King to the truth of this assertion, in his life of a man who was one of the brightest ornaments of the country in which he was born, the immortal Locke; and who appears to have derived the metaphysical cast of his thought, and the manly liberality of his sentiments, from his connexion with the Independents. "Educated, then," says the noble author, to use the words of Sir J. Mackintosh, "among the English Dissenters, during the short period of their political ascendancy, he early imbibed that deep piety and ardent spirit of liberty which actuated that body of men; and he probably imbibed also, in their schools, the disposition to metaphysical inquiries, which has every where accompanied the Calvinistic theology. Sects founded on the right of private judgment, naturally tend to purify themselves from intolerance, and in time learn to respect in others the freedom of thought, to the exercise of which they owe their own existence. *By the Independent divines who were his instructors, our philosopher was taught those principles of religious liberty, which they were the first to disclose to the world."—Locke's Life by Lord King, p.* 178, *quarto edition.*

"In one respect the Reformation conferred an unmixed benefit; it dispersed the wealth and broke the power of the priesthood: as for toleration, or any true notion of religious liberty, or any general freedom of conscience, we owe them not in the least degree to what is called the church of Eng-

land. On the contrary, we owe all these to the Independents in the time of the Commonwealth, and to Locke, their most illustrious and enlightened disciple."—*Ibid*, 276.

He will close this list of authorities by quoting the testimony of a man, who, whatever opinion may be entertained, by his enemies, respecting the cast and the course of his politics, cannot, in fairness, be objected to as a competent judge on this question. On the motion for inquiry into the cause of the death of the devoted missionary Smith, Lord Brougham is reported to have said, " Mr. Smith was a pious and faithful minister of the Independents, that body much to be respected, indeed, for their numbers; but far more to be held in lasting veneration for the unshaken fortitude with which, in all times, they have maintained their attachment to civil and religious liberty; and holding fast by their own principles, have carried, to its uttermost pitch, the great doctrine of absolute toleration: men to whose ancestors this country will ever acknowledge a boundless debt of gratitude, as long as freedom is prized amongst us: for they, I fearlessly confess it; they, with whatever *ridicule* some may visit their excesses, or with whatever *blame* others;—they, with the zeal of martyrs, the purity of early christians, the skill and courage of the most renowned warriors, obtained for England the free constitution she now enjoys. True to the generous principles in church and state, which won their immortal triumphs, their descendants still are seen clothed with the same amiable peculiarity of standing forward among all religious denominations, preeminent in toleration; so that although, in the progress of knowledge, other classes of dissenters may be approaching fast to overtake them, they still are foremost in this proud distinction."

The author ought, perhaps, to observe, that in the preceding remarks, he by no means intends to exclude from this honorable distinction, that body of christians called Baptists, or

Antipædobaptists; who, though they differ from the Independents respecting the subject and mode of the initiatory rite of admission into the external privileges of the christian church, yet symbolize with them on the subject of civil liberty.

CHAP. II.

Document relating to the constitution of the Independent church of Christ at Southampton—Import of the word church—The church a voluntary society—Entitled to the privilege of admitting or rejecting its members and of choosing its officers—Remarks on ordination—Gradation of officers—Bishop and deacons—Bishop and elder the same—Remarks on Episcopacy—No authority for it, in the office sustained by Timothy and Titus: nor by the Apostles—Remarks on apostolic succession—Apostolic fathers, Ignatius—His writings shewn to be interpolated—Testimony of some of the founders of the English Episcopal establishment, respecting the absence of scripture authority for Episcopacy—Cranmer—Stillingfleet—Concluding remarks.

The following document, dated 1688, relates to the period when the act of toleration was passed; and, as it involves the main principles on which the church of Christ, of which this is the memorial was constructed, it may, with propriety, be introduced in this place, and made the subject of some general remarks.

" The records of the congregational church of Christ in Southampton, including all the members thereunto belonging, inhabiting at Romsey and other adjacent places, from the year of our Lord one thousand six hundred and eighty-eight: at which time, after many years of disorders, breaches, and divisions, through the good hand of God upon us, a settlement was begun; first by the accession of divers members of a former church in Southampton, who by a joint agreement amongst themselves, dissolved their church state, propounded themselves, and were accordingly admitted actual members into this church. Afterwards the church considering the excellency and usefulness of a gospel order and discipline, as being agreeable to the mind of Christ, the rule of the word, and the practice of other congregational churches, and a hopeful way of establishing the church for a continuance, in future ages, in this place; and a means to promote peace and purity; being assembled together on the third day of August, (being the day appointed for that purpose,) after humiliation for former defections, did, in the name and authority of Christ, proceed to organize itself

with officers for the service of the church: upon which settlement the following particulars were agreed upon, by the general consent of the members, or the major part of them, viz.—

" I.—That the town of Southampton shall be the seat of this gospel church, (as being the place of its first foundation,) where the ordinances of Christ shall be administered, and where all members shall be admitted for time to come.

" II.—That the Lord's supper shall be statedly fixed to be enjoyed on the first Lord's day of every month, and so to continue until the church shall otherwise determine.

" III.—Forasmuch as Mr. Nathaniel Robinson, our present pastor, is not in all points satisfied, concerning the office of ruling elders, nevertheless, referring the matter to the church, to satisfy themselves therein, the church unanimously proceeded to the election of such elders, viz., Mr. Robert Thorner and Mr. John Lee, and desired them to undertake the sacred office, and therein to act, in all things, as occasion shall require, until either God shall persuade our said pastor, or else some other oppor-

tunity shall present for their actual ordaining, according to the rule of the word.

" IV.—Whereas the number of members at present inhabiting at Romsey, and thereabouts, is something considerable, and for the better inspection into the state of the poor, it was consented to, that two deacons should be chosen for those parts, as well as two for Southampton; and accordingly were elected for Southampton, Isaac Watts,* and Abraham Johns; and for Romsey, Arthur High, and Peter Hollis; nevertheless, it was determined that the collections should be received and the church stock should be kept by the deacons at Southampton; and to them, those of Romsey, should give in their accounts; and from thence have supplies for the poor, as occasions require; only to have something in hand to answer sudden or extraordinary cases that may happen to arise."

Three weeks afterwards, August 24th, the following entry appears.

" All the four deacons aforenamed, were solemnly

* The father of the celebrated Dr. Watts.

set apart by prayer, and entered upon their said office."

On this document, as it embodies the principles upon which the church of which this is the memorial, was constructed, it is desirable that the author should make a few remarks, for the instruction of the general reader, and also for the confirmation of those who professedly belong to this church.

It appears therefore, that a congregational, or independent church, had existed in the town of Southampton, anterior to this transaction, and, in all probability, prior to the time when the act of uniformity was passed, though no precise information respecting its origin, or its history is preserved.* It is well known that bodies of christians, whose principles substantially accorded with those of modern Independents had existed long before that time. It is common to date their origin from Robert Brown,

* If any objector to the principles of Independency should ask where was your religion prior to that time, the reply may be made in the words of Martin Luther, to the enquiry of a Roman Catholic, who demanded "where was your religion before the reformation?" "Where," he answered, "in the bible."

who in the year 1580, established a church of that denomination, in the city of Norwich. But though he might, at that time, have given a form and prominence to their sentiments, traces of them are to be found long anterior to that event in the pages of ecclesiastical history. The writings of Wickliffe furnish abundant evidence that the substantial principles of Independency were understood and approved by that distinguished man. They were acted upon by the purest bodies of christians, seceding from the church of Rome, in France, Lombardy, and the valleys of Piedmont, as far back as the ninth century; affording presumptive evidence that a continued succession of them had existed from very early times. The present learned Bishop of Lincoln, in his work on Tertullian, has admitted, that, in the time of that Father, all the churches were "Independent," employing not only the distinctive term by which churches of that order are now indicated; but also such other marks as point out their characteristic resemblance to those in modern times. His Lordship's words are, "I need scarcely observe that the force of this argument (relating to the concur-

rent maintenance of divine truth) was much greater in Tertullian's time, when all the churches were Independent, than in after ages, when the Bishops of Rome assumed the high authority of prescribing the rules of faith to the whole community."

The preceding document affords, likewise, an internal and undesigned evidence, that the nonconformists were men of candour and forbearance; not disposed to push to an extreme their individual opinions, in points that were not of vital importance; and, consequently, that their separation from the established church was on grounds that their consciences would not allow them to concede. Hence, we find that the same men, who were constrained to present an unyielding firmness to the exactions of ecclesiastical tyranny, were willing to merge the minor differences of sentiment, that existed amongst themselves, respecting the institution of ruling elders, for the purpose of general harmony.

With regard to the office of ruling, or lay elders, which is here referred to, it may be proper to observe that it was considered, by those who advocated this view, as a distinct office from that of the bishop, or

presbyter, or preaching elder, and the grounds upon which the opinion is formed are principally the presumed reference made to this office in 1 Timothy, v. 17. On this passage the commentary of Dr. Guyse is deserving of attention. " I incline to think that the apostle intends only *preaching* elders when he directs double honour to be paid to the elders that rule well, especially those who *labour* in the word and doctrine; and that the distinction lies not in the *order* of officers, but in the *degree* of their diligence, faithfulness, and eminence, in *laboriously* fulfilling their ministerial work; and so the emphasis is to be laid on the word *labour* in the word and doctrine which has an *especially* annexed to it." In this view, in all probability, the church, as well as its pastor, eventually concurred; since we find no further reference to this subject, nor does it appear that any officers, of a similar description, were chosen to supply the vacancy occasioned by the death of those who were thus elected. It may, likewise, be proper to observe, for the information of the general reader, that the term *member*, employed in this document, relates only to those, who, on a satisfactory evidence

of their scriptural qualifications, were, by the suffrages of the church, received into its communion: and may be considered, in general, as synonymous with the word *communicant*. The magnitude of the congregation, therefore, or those who attended on the preaching of the gospel, at that time, and in the existing place of worship, is not to be limited by the number of those who were in actual communion.

It is likewise evident, from this document, that the great principles upon which the churches of Christ, amongst nonconformists, are constituted, are the right of private judgment, and the sufficiency of the inspired volume to guide the humble and diligent enquirer, in all subjects relating to faith and discipline. That the sacred Scriptures do not descend to a minute specification of the several parts of this discipline the Independents readily admit; but they, obviously, contain some great principles, appearing either in the form of a simple proposition, or as embodied in historical facts, an adherence to which will guard the spiritual pupil from serious and important mistake. Of such principles may be specified—the spirituality of the kingdom of Christ and its independ-

ence of secular power—the sole authority of Christ as the head of the church—the right of an individual church, acting in the name of Christ, and, according to the prescribed regulations of his word,—to elect its officers—to receive or reject its members—and to manage its own affairs These principles, relating to the constitution and discipline of the churches of Christ are not presented in a connected form, in the sacred Volume, but, like the doctrines it contains, are interpersed through different parts, leaving it to the careful reader to adjust the scattered materials, and to build up that goodly edifice which is adapted for mutual improvement in spiritual affairs.

It is as great a fallacy in reasoning, to assert that, on this account, there is no regular system of ecclesiastical discipline, existing in the New Testament, as it would be to maintain, that we have no code of morals, because the precepts of the decalogue are not ramified, in their practical application, to all the possible occurrences in the economy of human life. In both cases a similar mode of procedure is adopted, and obviously for reasons that apply, with equal force to each: for in both cases it would be evident,

that, if a different course had been pursued, not only would the statute book of regulations have been so voluminous as to render it impossible to be read and remembered, by the mass of mankind; but, also, there would have been no room left for those deliberative acts of judgment, conscience, and will, in which the morality of obedience chiefly consists.

It is still further deserving of our attention, in the document before referred to, that the word "church," is applied to the assembly to which it relates. The term, in the original language of the New Testament, simply imports an assemblage of persons, convened for any purpose; and is rendered by the words congregation, assembly, or even multitude, as in Acts xix., xxxii., 40. As applied to ecclesiastical purposes it is used in two general senses: in the one or larger it is employed to include the whole body of the faithful, however dispersed by time or distance, or diversified by minor or unessential modes; and whether to be found in heaven or on earth. In this sense it is used in Acts xx., 28; Ephesians i., 22, v., 25. In its minor, or restricted sense, it denotes a body of faithful men, accustomed to assemble in

one place, to conform to the discipline and enjoy the privileges of the gospel. In this sense the term is used in Acts xiv., 23; 1 Cor. iv., 17; 1 Cor. xiv., 23. Between these senses of the word, as referring to the whole body of the faithful, or to a separate compartment of the universal church, there appears to be no intermediate sense in which the word is employed in the inspired volume.*

The application of the word to the material structure as distinct from the worshippers—to the official members, or clergy, as separated from its lay or ordinary members—to the temporal revenues as diverse from its spiritual qualities,—the Dissenters regard as unscriptural and, consequently, injurious. The idea of a national church, participating in authority, co-extensive in dominion, and leagued in connexion with a temporal government, they maintain, is

* This statement entirely accords with the definition of the same subject contained in the twentieth article of the established church of England, as "a congregation of faithful men." How incongruous, however, that definition is with the constitution and practice of that church it is almost unnecessary to state: in which its members are circumscribed by parochial or national limits, and not by the moral or spiritual qualifications of those within its pale.

no where, in the New Testament, to be found: and that a collocation of words corresponding with the following expressions, the church of England, the church of Scotland, never meets our eye. They read, they acknowledge, of the churches *in* Asia, the church *in* Babylon, the church *in* the house: the plural number being invariably used when more assemblies than one are referred to, excepting when the sacred writers speak of the commonwealth of Christ, in its collective capacity.

Another fact embodied in the document, and marking the resemblance between the constitution of this church and the sacred polity of the New Testament, is the mode by which the members were united in christian fellowship. Whoever reads the sacred volume, attentively, with reference to this object, must perceive that the churches were voluntary associations. They were not constituted by legislative enactments, nor birth, nor local circumstances, but were bound alone by the principles of their common faith. The nature of this association was purely spiritual, and was designed to express the allegiance of the respective members to Christ and

to edify one another in love. The qualifications, also, for admission into this circle were purely of a spiritual or moral nature; and the candidates, in order to participate in the privileges of communion, had only to evince, by a credible profession, that they were actuated by the same spirit and regulated by the same rules.

Corresponding with these principles the churches of congregational nonconformists are voluntary societies. They are not formed on any arbitrary or accidental principle of association, that, like the frosts of winter, may congeal the most heterogenous materials into one common mass; but by a substantial agreement in the faith, practice, and discipline of the gospel; by love to each other and submission to the authority of Christ.

The voluntary nature of this association necessarily involves a right, on the part of the church, or a majority of its members, to judge of the presumed qualifications of those who seek to participate of its privileges. This is a principle, which, though it be, like any other, however excellent, that comes into contact with the depraved nature of men, liable to

abuse, is, nevertheless, scriptural in its authority, reasonable in its foundation, and beneficial in its effects. It may be admitted that though, antecedently to an expressed wish on the part of a candidate to connect himself with such a society, the practice arising out of it would be an infringement on individual liberty; yet, from the period that he puts himself forward in such a character, he virtually calls on the church, either in itself, or through the medium of its official organs, to form, to the best of their ability, a scriptural estimate of his qualifications for membership. This is the principle upon which all voluntary societies are formed, and without which they could not exist. The benefits arising from its operation, as it relates to scriptural affairs, are innumerable. The irreligious have thus a barrier placed between, them and the desecration of the Lord's supper, over which it is difficult to pass:—the proud are brought to a test, as it relates to their giving a reason of the hope that is in them, to which if they are unwilling to submit, it affords a presumptive evidence of their spiritual disqualification:—the sincere and humble believer is encouraged, when thus a collateral evidence

of the genuineness of his piety is afforded by the concurrent testimony of experienced and holy men:—whilst to the church itself it is of incalculable benefit, by excluding, as far as human foresight can accomplish it, the litigious and unspiritual; the ignorant and profane; and thus laying the foundation of mutual confidence amongst those who are redeemed by the same blood, members of the same mystical body, and heirs of the same inheritance.

The scriptural authority for this mode of procedure is unquestionable, and is essentially involved in the prospective regulation contained in Matthew xviii., 17. "And if he, thy brother, neglect to hear them (the witnesses), tell it to the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man, and as a publican." The right to form an estimate of the spiritual qualifications of candidates for membership is involved in the command expressed in Romans xiv. 1. "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations:" and that the practice of the primitive churches was but an exemplification of the principle is evident from scripture facts. Thus, when the apostle Paul, after his

conversion, was come to Jerusalem, and essayed to join himself to the disciples, they, acting as a voluntary society, refused to accede to his wish, " for they were afraid of him and believed not that he was a disciple, till Barnabas took him to the apostles and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way."* Thus, likewise, the right, and consequent obligation, of such a society to exercise a benevolent superintendence over the conduct of those within its circle is involved in the command of the same apostle to the Corinthian church to eject the offending and incestuous member from themselves :† and thus, still further, the injunction, that, when the *punishment which was inflicted of many,* had wrought its salutary effects that he should be received again, and forgiven, and comforted, lest such an one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow:‡ establishing by this procedure a precedent which should be applied to the discipline of the churches of Christ in every subsequent period of time. The exhortations, cautions, rules, contained in the various epistles, and trans-

* Acts ix. 26. † 1 Cor. v. 4. 5. ‡ 2 Cor. ii. 6. 7.

mitted to believers in their collective capacity :—the addresses to the apocalyptic churches—all presuppose the adoption and application of the principle here asserted, and without which they would be nugatory and vain. Such, then, are the principles and practices contained in the New Testament; such are those upon which the churches of congregational nonconformists are formed; and such, alone, we are bold to aver, can accomplish the ends of discipline contained in the apostolic command, and addressed to the collective church, "Wherefore comfort yourselves *together*, and *edify one another* even as ye do. Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak."*

The officers of the church, thus voluntarily combined, were elected by the suffrages of its members to the important station which they occupied, and were solemnly dedicated to the discharge of its duties by the apostles themselves; or in their absence or after their time by the laying on of the

* 1 Thes. v. 11.

hands of the presbytery: these acts unitedly constituted ordination, in the fullest sense of the word. A brief reference to the facts of scripture history, relating to the mode of official investiture, will illustrate and confirm this remark. The first instance of ordination that is recorded in the church, subsequently to the resurrection of Christ, was the choosing of an apostle to fill up the vacancy occasioned by the apostacy and death of Judas.* The method of procedure is distinctly declared. The whole church, consisting of about one hundred and twenty members, were then assembled in one place. Peter, in the name of his apostolic brethren, stated to them the necessity of choosing a substitute for the wretched apostate; and, also, particularized the qualification with which, as an intended apostle, he should be distinguished:—that he should have been an eye-witness of the resurrection of Christ. Keeping this prerequisite in view, the church was at liberty to select two from their number, leaving it further to be determined by the "giving forth of their lots" which

* Acts i. 15—26.

of them God had designed for this office. According to this arrangement they appointed two—Joseph and Matthias. The same persons, the whole multitude who had thus appointed them, or set them out, prayed for direction in their further choice and they gave their lots,* and the lot fell upon Matthias. In this procedure it is evident that, though the apostles presided, and gave directions, as was necessary in the infancy of the church, and before the canon of Scripture was completed; yet, even in the appointment of an apostle, the choice of the people was the instituted means of ascertaining the will of God.

The next instance that occurs is the ordination of a deacon, mentioned in Acts vi., 1, 2, 3,. The method adopted was evidently, in all essential points, the same with the preceding. The people were called upon to exercise their privileges, "Look ye out among you seven men."—The qualifications were then specified that should direct their choice; they must be of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost, and of wisdom; whom the apostles, subsequently to the

* ψηφιζω to choose by calculi, or small stones.

choice of the assembled church, would appoint to their office by solemn prayer and imposition of hands. Thus in this act of ordination the two-fold parts, consisting in the choice of the people, and the designation or laying on of the hands,* by the pre-existing officers of the church, were obviously combined.

It is strange that an objection to the popular mode of official appointment should be urged by the advocates of episcopacy on the ground that the ordination referred to, in the preceding transaction was simply to the office of a deacon, and consequently, it is asserted, that it can furnish no precedent, as it relates to that of a bishop or elder: of the *spiritual* qualifications of which, it is maintained, the people are incompetent judges. This objection is certainly urged with but little propriety by those who employ the very office in question, that of a deacon, for every purpose of a ministerial nature, excepting the administration of the ordinance of the Lord's supper. It ought, however, to be observed that, in the instance referred to, there appears to be only the application of a *general*

* χειροθεσία

principle relating to ordination to a *particular* case, and thus to form a justifiable precedent in the mode. Even in that case, the qualifications were of a *spiritual* nature, the men to be elected, were to be full of wisdom and of the Holy Ghost; qualifications that could hardly be surpassed, even with reference to the office of a bishop, and of which, nevertheless, the people were called upon to exercise their judgment. But the argument, if it have any force, bears on the other side; for justly may it be maintained, that, if with reference to an office, relating in its original design to the *temporalities* of the church, such as serving the tables, and supplying the poor, the people were to exercise their choice, a fortiori, how much more important is the enjoyment of this privilege, in relation to that which is purely of a *spiritual* nature, which involves interests of a higher order, even the care of souls and respecting which a greater caution should be used.

The next instance, in course, in which ordination occurs is Acts xiv., 23. "And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed, with fasting, they commended them to the Lord."

Both the parts which unite to form the act of ordination, in the fullest sense of the word,—election by the people, and solemn designation by the pre-existing officers of the church, would, in this instance, seem to be combined; for though the former is not specifically mentioned in the narrative, it appears to be *implied* in the original import of the term which is used, and which expresses popular election by the lifting up of the hand.* The writer is aware that this word is sometimes employed by classical authors in a sense in which this procedure could not have been involved; yet, from its obvious and original import, agreeing so evidently with the mode of acting, narrated in the two preceding cases, and from which, as precedents, the apostles could hardly have departed; from the additional fact that, in the only other instance in which this word is used, "he was chosen of the churches to travel with us;"† popular election is almost necessarily involved; he thinks that, in all fairness, he may conclude that, the third instance of ordination, corroborates the proposition maintained.

* χειροτονεω † 2 Cor. viii. 19.

Proofs of the continuance of this practice, for some centuries after the time of the apostles, are apparent in the history of the church. Clement of Rome, in his epistle to the Corinthians, affirms that "the apostles themselves appointed approved persons unto the office of the ministry, by or with the consent of the choice of the whole church."* Ignatius, writing to the brethren, says, it becomes you as a church of God to choose or ordain a deacon to go to Antioch, as the ambassador of God.† Tertullian declares the elders came into their honour or office by the testimony of the people. Thus, when Alexander was chosen bishop of Jerusalem, it was by the "compulsion or choice of the members of that church." Cyprian was chosen bishop of the diocese of Carthage by its inhabitants and members. Thus Pontius, his deacon, writes that, though he was a novice, (neophytus) yet, by the grace of God, and the favor of the people, he was elevated to that sublime dignity.‡

* Cor. xliv. § † Phil. x. §

‡ See an Enquiry into the Constitution of the Primitive Church, by Lord Chancellor King.

Thus the right of the people to choose their own spiritual officers, as well as the mode by which it was effected, were maintained inviolate, for a considerable time, in the earlier history of the primitive church. Vestiges of it may be traced in ecclesiastical proceedings in almost every subsequent period: and, though the members of the church of England are, in ordinary cases, deprived of this privilege, yet the previous existence of it is recognized, even in the present day, in the empty ceremony of the *congé d'élire*. Indeed, if scripture or history had been silent on this subject, unprejudiced reason might have led us to adopt these views. It is as necessary to the dignity of a moral agent that his affections should be uncontrolled, excepting by reason and conscience, as that his will should be free. The generous impulses of our nature are too delicate to be suppressed by any foreign interference; and they either rise up in virtuous indignation against the unlicensed intruder, or wither beneath his touch. The spontaneous exercise of our affections, in all the social relations of life, and especially in those of a more sacred nature, is a source of the most refined

gratification to the individual himself, confers the highest honor on those to whom these regards may be directed, and is thus, the most durable cement of that social compact by which man is bound to man. If there be one act of his life in which it is the duty of a christian to exercise this privilege, it is in reference to his spiritual pastor and guide. The relation itself is so serious, the mutual duties which it involves are so sacred, the consequences that arise from it are so indescribably momentous, that a man had better submit to impertinent dictation in the physcian to whom he shall commit his health; or the legal adviser to whom he shall refer his secular affairs; or, even, in the tender depositary of his future joys and sorrows, than in his spiritual pastor and guide. All our feelings as men, all our principles as christians, obtest against a practice by which a minister of religion, with qualifications or without; pious or profane; may, by a foreign interference, be imposed upon a religious society, without their previous approbation, or, even contrary to their wishes. The consequences that have so often arisen from this, in haughty assumption on the one side, or in tame com-

pliance, or ineffectual resistance on the other, I need not pause to describe: such a practice was never known till the imposing fabric of ecclesiastical domination was erected on the ruins of religious liberty.

It is justly a subject of astonishment that some protestant divines, in their zeal for episcopacy, should deny the validity of such a mode of ordination, so obviously based upon scripture precedent, supported by historical facts, and confirmed by the reason of the case, and yet concede it to the clerical members of the church of Rome.* Let a candidate for the sacred office be endowed with the highest qualifications of intellect, learning, and piety;—let him be chosen, as were the seven deacons, by the unanimous suffrages of the church;—let him be dedicated to his sacred functions by the "laying on of the hands of a presbytery," composed of men long distinguished for their wisdom or their worth; yet, is it maintained, that this aspirant for office does not enter, as a good shepherd, through the accredited

* This form of ordination was allowed to be valid in the church of England till the time when the act of uniformity was passed.—*See Burnet's History of his own time.*

door, but as a spiritual robber, climbs up some other way, because the hand of a titled prelate has not been imposed upon his head: and should he subsequently conform to the established church, he could not without re-ordination, be allowed to officiate within her pale. On the other side, should a priest of the church of Rome, that church which is portrayed in language, which, of course, every churchman must believe, as "being not only a harlot, as the scripture calleth her, but also a foul, filthy, old withered harlot; as the foulest and filthiest harlot that ever was seen:"* should one of this community, though he may have been ordained by a catholic bishop, confessedly heretical, and perhaps ungodly, afterwards conform to the episcopal establishment, he would, without any subsequent act of ordination, be received as one of her ministers. By this culpable spirit of exclusiveness does this ecclesiastical incorporation, cut off, from legitimate official appointment, in one sweeping act, the ministers of almost all the reformed churches in protestant Europe;

* See Homily third, of the established church, against Peril of Idolatry.

by far the greater number of the devoted men, who are labouring with so much success in the new world—the whole of the nonconformist pastors in England, Ireland, and Wales:—all those of the established church of Scotland;—and, with very few exceptions, all those who are devoted to their vocation in that land of intelligence and piety; and practically maintains that Calvin, Beza, Knox, Owen, Howe, Charnock, Doddridge, Watts, Hall, Chalmers, Wardlaw, Pye Smith, and Jay, have, either as they lived in past, or live in present times, walked about, in the unsanctioned performance of sacred duties, clad in the surreptitious investiture of "pretended holy orders." If any appearance of severity is indicated in these remarks, the candid reader must perceive that it assumes that aspect not from an overcolouring of the picture, but from a simple disclosure of the deformity of the fact: and that if the church of England is libelled it is solely by herself. Surely if any thing could expose ordination itself to ridicule, in the estimation of reflecting men, it must be such assumptions as these.*

* This was one of the points upon which Howe, the

Of the churches of Christ, thus constituted, in the New Testament, the official gradations were only two, bishops, or elders, and deacons, : for, though other offices are distinctly mentioned, they were evidently adapted to a special emergency and a peculiar crisis in the universal church; and not designed to be connected with a separate compartment of it, in its organic form. On this point, it is perhaps proper to inform the reader that the question of the divine origin of episcopacy depends. That system recognizes three orders in its polity, bishops, priests or presbyters, and deacons: Presbyterianism and Independency only two. In reference to this controversy it may be stated as a preliminary remark, to aid us in coming to a decision, that if the two terms of bishop

unearthly Philip Henry, and many other eminent nonconformists, felt insuperable difficulties. "Pray, Sir," asked Dr. Seth Ward, then bishop of Exeter, to the first-named of these, in endeavouring to overcome his objections with reference to nonconformity, "what *hurt* is there in being twice ordained?" "*Hurt*, my lord," rejoined Howe: "it *hurts* my understanding; the thought is shocking; it is an absurdity, since nothing can have two beginnings. I am sure I am a minister of Christ, and am ready to debate that matter with your lordship, if your lordship pleases, but I cannot begin again to be a minister."

and presbyter, or elder, are interchangeably used;—if when one is employed, in a passage, the other is omitted;—if the same duties are assigned to each; and the same qualifications are specified for the right performance of those duties; the reader is justified in believing, that they are but different terms, to indicate the same office, and that the bishop and the presbyter are the same. That the postulata here stated, are exemplified in the subject in discussion, is not to be successfully denied. When the church at Antioch transmitted a collection to the suffering believers at Jerusalem, "they sent it to the elders or presbyters by the hand of Barnabas."* Had a superior order existed in that church, is it credible to suppose that it would have been unnamed or overlooked? When the apostle Paul, from Miletus, sent to Ephesus, and "called for the elders of the church,"† he addressed them to the following effect, "Take heed therefore to yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers."‡ evincing that the elders in one

* Acts xi. 30. † Acts, xx. 17.

‡ επισκοποι bishops. Was it to evade the force of this

part of this passage are the bishops in the other. We read, in Titus,* " for this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city. If any be blameless—for a bishop must be blameless as the steward of God."† Now, if the office referred to, in the preceding part of this quotation, be not the same, the qualifications for which are specified in the ensuing, or, in other words, if bishop and elder are not convertible terms, the apostle must be regarded as reasoning in the most incoherent manner. Thus, also, the apostle Peter addresses the presbyters in the following language, " The elders which are among you I exhort," &c. Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, literally, exercising the office of a bishop; proving that, in his estimation, bishop and presbyter were the same.

argument that the translators of the New Testament rendered the word, occurring in so awkward a position for their episcopal prejudices, by the term *overseer* instead of *bishop*, a practice no where else observed

* Titus, i. 5, 6, 7. † 1 Epis. v. 1.

It is a striking corroboration of the force of these views, that, in the apostolic addresses to the different churches, the only recognized official distinctions are two. Thus "to all the saints at Philippi with the bishop and deacons :"* is it to be imagined that if another established order had existed it would have been overlooked? From the preceding remarks it appears to be incontrovertibly evident, that the words bishop and elder are interchangeably used—that, where one is employed, in a passage, the other is omitted;—that the same duties are assigned to each;—that similar qualifications are specified for the right performance of those duties; and that, consequently, there were but two permanent orders in the constitution of the primitive church.

Many learned and candid Episcopalians, convinced by the force of these and similar arguments, that the origin of episcopacy cannot be traced in the official distinctions to which reference has been made, seek for it in the office sustained by Timothy and Titus; the one of whom is designated by them bishop of Ephesus,

* Phil. i. 1.

and the other, bishop of Crete. Against this view of the presumed official superiority of these holy men, may be urged the *mode* in which they were invested with their office. Timothy, without doubt, was inducted "by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery:"* and if his office had been superior to an elder, those sustaining a superior grade, we may presume, would have been employed in his ordination. The facts, relating to Timothy and Titus, interwoven with the thread of gospel history, evince that they could not have been local or stationary bishops, exercising a jurisdiction over a given province or diocese, in the modern acceptation of the term. Before his presumed elevation to the episcopate of Ephesus, Timothy was employed, either in accompanying the apostle Paul, or as a messenger for him, in different and numerous parts; and after that reputed event, he followed the same apostle to Macedonia, whence along with him, he sent his salutation to the Corinthians.† Soon after he attended him to Corinth, and thence, also, along with him sends his

* 1 Tim. iv. 14. † 2 Cor. i. 1.

salutations to the Romans.* Returning from Macedonia, he went with Paul to Asia.† Thither he was called some years after by the apostle to Rome in his second epistle to him. He was with the same apostle at Rome when he wrote his epistle to the Philippians,‡ Colossians,‖ and Philemon.§ He was for some time a prisoner at Rome, but afterwards set at liberty.

As it relates to Titus, he attended the apostle Paul, by whose ministry he had been converted, from Syria to the Synod of Jerusalem.¶ Some years after, the apostle sent him to Corinth: coming from thence to him in Macedonia, he gave an account of the Corinthian church, and was returned to them bearing a second epistle.** He accompanied the same apostle into the island of Crete, where he left him "to set in order things that were wanting:" ††— that is, to instruct the converts in the nature of church polity; and ordain in every place, where a church was formed, suitable persons for the pastoral office. How long he remained in Crete we can-

* Rom. xvi. 21. † Acts, xx. 4. ‡ Phil. i. 1. ‖ Coll. i. 1. § Philemon 1. ¶ Gal. ii. 1—3. ** 2 Cor. xii 18.—vii. 6—15. †† Titus, i. 5.

not precisely ascertain; but it is beyond doubt that, in the epistle addressed to him in that place, he was required by the apostle, to come to him at Nicopolis, when he should send Tychicus and Artemas to supply his lack of service;* and who, it may hence be inferred, sustained an office similar to his own. After this he was sent by the same apostle to Dalmatia.† These facts, in reference to these holy men, so essential to determine the merits of the question, should be distinctly kept in view. Now it may justly be asked how was it possible that the occupations of a life, of so perambulatory a nature, could exist in connexion with the presumed office of a bishop, the duties of which are local and stationary: or if moveable it is only within the precincts of the lines of episcopal demarcation, and not as in their cases, extending through different kingdoms and provinces.

The facts of the case appear to be simply these: Timothy and Titus belonged to the class of extraordinary officers existing in the church which was designated by the term "evangelist:" it is expressly

* Titus, iii. 12. † 2 Tim. iv. 10.

applied to Timothy,* and as the duties of Titus were precisely of the same order, we have a right to presume that his office was the same. This office, like those referred to in Ephesians iv. 11, 12, was not connected with any separate compartment of the universal church, as a necessary part of its organization, but was adapted to a special emergency, to be used then, and to be used now, as occasions may require; an evangelist was, as the name imports, a messenger of good tidings.

It was these views that induced the learned episcopalian Whitby to acknowledge that the offices of Timothy were altogether extraordinary; dissimilar from the regular ministry, and not designed to be permanent. The first ecclesiastical historian who refers to the traditions, respecting the episcopacy of Timothy and Titus, is Eusebius, and with evident appearance of incredulity as to the truth. The postscripts, at the close of the respective epistles, to these distinguished men, mentioning the one bishop of Ephesus and the other of Crete, are of no authority

* 2 Tim. iv. 5.

in the question. Like most of those, occupying a similar relative position in the sacred books, many of which are palpably untrue, they are the work of a more recent hand; and were probably added, in the fourth or fifth century, to serve an obvious purpose, when episcopacy became invested with the appendages of official pomp. The assertion in reference to one is undoubtedly untrue, since we learn from Acts xx. that the church at Ephesus was in possession of its bishops, whilst the evangelist Timothy was the travelling companion of Paul. It is also a strong presumptive evidence of the truth of these statements, that the apostle, in his epistle to the Ephesians, makes no mention of Timothy as the resident bishop.

Driven from this refuge others have sought for the origin of episcopacy in the apostolate itself; with what success it behoves us briefly to enquire. That the apostolic office was not designed for perpetuity, and, consequently, that those who first sustained it could have no successors, must be evident from the following remarks. The very terms of its appointment, and the purpose for which it was instituted, prove the truth of this assertion. It formed a

necessary qualification, in those by whom it was first sustained, that they should have seen Christ, after his resurrection, with their bodily eyes; and have received their commission from him:* and, also, that they should be able to accredit, by the attestation of miracles, the authority with which they were invested. Hence, when the apostle of the Gentiles would repel the objections of those who questioned the validity of his pretensions, he triumphantly refers to the marks of official distinction which he bore. "Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?"† Their office, likewise, was different from that of the pastorate in the *universality* of its extent; for whilst the latter was limited, in general terms, to a specific church, or to a neighbourhood, the other, in the amplitude of its range, embraced the whole world. Hence, likewise, the concluding and important remark, that though the apostles ordained bishops and deacons, they never ordained successors in office; and the apostolate passed away with those by whom it was sustained.

* Acts, i. 22. † 1 Cor. iv. 1.

The election of Matthew is no objection to this assertion, since that event took place to fill up the vacancy, occasioned by the apostacy of Judas, ere they entered upon their work. In this view of the subject it may be added, in conclusion, Barrow and Lightfoot concur.

If these observations be founded in truth, it may, in fairness, be asked what becomes of the boasted apostolic succession, to which the advocates of episcopacy, both protestant and catholic, so strenuously adhere? If by it be understood the continuation of holy men in the church, sustaining an office, similar to that of the apostles, the foundation on which it rests falls to the ground; since it is evident that the apostles, as such, had no successors; and the uncoveted honour of pretending to apostolic succession, in this sense of the word, may, with propriety, be left to the pope of Rome. If by it be understood, an unbroken line of bishops, continuing from those ordained by the apostles, down to the present day, the attempt to establish this, though frequently made, has never yet succeeded. Cave and Bingham made the effort with with the greatest zeal; but it is a miserable fail-

ure, in the estimation of every reasonable man. Ecclesiastical history, on this subject, is most defective where its assistance is most required; in the times immediately succeeding the apostolic age. The principal sources of evidence are Eusebius, three centuries after that period, and who, himself, had no other testimony to produce than the conjectures of an "uncertain Clement,"* and the commentaries of Hegesippus, sources upon which no dependance can be placed.

The testimony of Eusebius, himself, is sufficient to determine the absurd pretensions to this unbroken succession, since he admits, that it is not an easy matter to find out those who succeeded the apostles, in the churches planted by them, unless it be those mentioned in the writings of Paul. The catalogues of the presumed line of bishops are not only defective, but contradictory. As it regards the bishop of Rome, Irenæus states, that Linus was the first ordained by Paul and Peter; then Anacletus, then Clement. Tertullian asserts that Clement was the first after Peter.†

* Proved by Joseph Scaliger not to be Clement of Alexandria.
† See Cave's Lives of the Fathers.

Eusebius maintains that Linus was the first, but after the martyrdom of Paul and Peter. The same writer mentions Peter and Euodius, severally, as the first bishop of Antioch: on the other side Jerome describes Peter as bishop of Rome, and says, that Ignatius was the third bishop of Antioch, after the apostle Peter. With great propriety may we quote, on this subject, the language of the learned Stillingfleet, and which, as that of an episcopalian, ought to have its weight. "What becomes, then, of our unquestionable line of succession, of the bishops of several churches, and the large diagrams made of the apostolical churches, as if the writer had been clarenceaux to the apostles themselves? Is it come to this, at last, that we have nothing but what we have in scripture? and must then the tradition of the church be our rule to interpret scriptures by? An excellent way to find out the truth, doubtless, to bend the rule to the crooked stick, to make the judge stand to the opinion of his lacquey, what sentence he shall pass upon the question: to make scripture stand, cap in hand, to tradition, to know whether it may have leave to speak or no. Are all the great outcries of

apostolical tradition, of personal succession, of unquestionable records, resolved at last into the scripture itself, by him, from whom all these long pedigrees are fetched? Then let succession know its place, and learn to veil bonnet to the scriptures. And, withal, let men take heed of over-reaching themselves, when they would bring down so large a catalogue of single bishops, from the first and purest times of the church; for it will be hard for others to believe them, when Eusebius professeth it so hard to find them. Well might Scaliger then complain that the interval from the last chapter of the Acts to the middle of Trajan, in which time Quadratus and Ignatius began to flourish, was a mere chaos of time, filled up with the rude conceptions of Papias, Hermes, and others, who, like Hannibal, when they could not find find a way through, would make one, either by force or fraud."*

If by succession, finally, be understood the continuation of the principles and institutions relating to the kingdom of Christ; the only succession for which it is of importance to contend, the writer of this has only to desire that, with reference to this

* Irenicum. Part II. chapter vi., page 297.

object, the two systems of Episcopacy and Independency may be diligently compared with the word of God.

To the testimonies, thus adduced, from the sacred Volume, to the identity of the office of bishop and elder, may be added, with propriety, a few, selected from the earliest christian writers, especially, from the apostolic fathers, so called, because they lived before the expiration of the lives of the apostles, and were, most of them, known to those holy men. The first evidence adduced is from Clement of Rome, who existed in the latter part of the first century, and is the same to whom the apostle refers, as his fellow-labourer in Philippians iv., 3. In his epistle to the Corinthians,* he states that the apostles "having preached the gospel in countries and towns, constituted the first fruits of their conversions, whom they approved by the spirit, *bishops* and deacons of those who should believe." Polycarp, who had been a disciple of the apostle John, and lived about the middle of the second century, speaks only of presbyters and deacons as having authority over the people.† In the same section he points out the duties

* XLII. § † Epistles to the Philippians. v. §

of deacons, and in another those of presbyters, but no where of *bishops*, as a distinct order; an omission not to be accounted for had it then been in existence. Irenæus, who lived towards the latter part of the second century, observes, in reference to some heretics, existing in his day, "we challenge them to shew that tradition, which was transmitted from the apostles, by a succession of presbyters." Why not of bishops if it had existed as a distinct and superior order? The first writer that mentions the three orders of bishops, priests, and deacons, is Ignatius, who lived in the latter part of the first and the beginning of the second century: and, as his epistles are the magazine from whence the advocates of episcopacy draw their most powerful weapons, they are deserving of a few remarks. In the writings ascribed to this apostolic father, the superiority of the bishop to the presbyter, is, indeed, repeatedly asserted, and distinctly expressed; but what degree of credit is due to these assertions it behoves us to enquire. The fact is incontestible, that some writings were entirely forged, and others were interpolated, by ecclesiastics, in the fourth and fifth centuries, for the purpose of advancing the exclusive interests of the

priesthood: and these palpable forgeries, and glaring interpolations, were palmed upon the world for truth; of the former kind, may be specified the "Apostolical Constitutions," the spurious character of which has been demonstrated: of the latter, the writings ascribed to Ignatius, afford an evident proof. What credit is due to so corrupted a source of evidence may be inferred from the following quotations, which for the edification of the reader, the author has selected from his epistles. The venerable father is made to say to the Ephesians,* "that they are to be subject to their bishop and the presbytery that they may be wholly and thoroughly sanctified. The more any one sees his bishop silent, the more let him revere him." "It is therefore evident that we ought to look upon the bishop even as we would do upon the Lord himself."† In the epistle to the Magnesians he is made to say of Sotion, a deacon, "I rejoice, forasmuch as he is subject unto his bishop, as to the grace of God: and to the presbytery as to the law of Jesus Christ."‡ He speaks of the bishop as "presiding in the place of God, and the presbyters in the place

* Epistle to the Ephesians. II. § † VI. § ‡ II §

of the councils of the apostles."* "In like manner let all reverence the deacons, as Jesus Christ; and the bishop, as the Father; and the presbyters, as the sanhedrim of God, and the college of the apostles."† "See that ye all follow your bishop as Jesus Christ, the Father; and the presbytery, as the apostles: and reverence the deacons, as the command of God." "Attend to the bishop, that God also may attend to you." "*I pledge my soul for those who are subject to the bishop,* the presbyters, and the deacons: may it be my lot to be in communion with them in God."‡

Let these quotations be diligently compared with the unpretending humility with which the apostle Peter speaks of himself,§ and also the apostle Paul,‖ and the disparity appears so wide, as to evince that both could not be of the same spirit. Let these pompous, officious, reiterated claims of the superhuman dignity of the bishop be carefully considered, and it must appear evident, that they are not the expressions of the venerable father in question, but the interpolations of a later hand, to serve an especial design. The concessions

* VI. § † Epistle to the Trallians. III. § ‡ Epistle to Polycarp. VI. §. § 1 Peter, v. 1. ‖ 1 Cor. iv. 1.

of the learned and candid episcopalian Jortin, on this subject, are deserving of our attention. " That the *larger* epistles of Ignatius are generally supposed to be interpolated." As an illustration and a proof he cites the following quotation from these corrupted writings. " My son," says Solomon, " honour God and the King: but *I* say unto you honour God as the Author and Lord of all; and the bishop as the High-priest, who bears the image of God; of God as he is a ruler, and of Christ as he is a priest; and after him honour the king also." " The author of this," says Jortin, " in all probability, was a bishop, but not such a bishop as Ignatius! The *Scripture* says, but *I* say, I who am wiser *and greater than Solomon!* a very modest speech truly, and much in character, and becoming the meek Ignatius. Here the bishop is equalled, or rather preferred, to Jesus Christ; for Christ is not suffered to be ἀρχων, a ruler, though he be King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. After this honor is paid to the bishop, leave is given to the christians to honor Cæsar! How condescending and how gracious! and how well contrived to make the Roman emperors very fond of

their christian subjects."* It ought to be added that though the larger epistles of Ignatius have been examined and condemned as interpolated, by Usher, Pearson, Hammond, Cotelerius, Isaac Vossius and Le Clerc, as well as by many other eminent scholars; yet it is to the corrupted writings, containing such impious pretensions, such barefaced forgeries, as those that have met the reader's eye, that episcopalians resort, for the sturdiest weapons to be employed in the defence of their system.

That episcopacy became the dominant system, in the fourth and fifth centuries, is not to be disputed; this result is, however, to be attributed to the pride and ambition of ecclesiastics, and not to apostolic precedent and scriptural authority. This form of polity, we fearlessly assert, arose with the corruptions of the christian religion: grew with their growth and strengthened with their strength: till episcopacy, discarding the aboriginal and humble prototype, as it existed in the unpretending pastor of a separate church; and advancing through the successive gra-

* Jortin's Remarks, vol. i. page 62.

dations of parochial, metropolitan, diocesan, and patriarchal, stood forth, at length, in its full-blown honors, crowned with the tiara of glory, in the person of the pope of Rome.

But, as the question of the divine authority of episcopacy, upon which many of its modern advocates ground their pretensions, depends for its support upon the distinction, asserted to exist, between the office of a bishop and presbyter, the writer trusts that he will not be considered as protracting the investigation to a wearisome extent should he adduce some additional proofs of the spurious character of this system, from the testimony of the most eminent and learned men. Passing by the evidence to be deduced from canons and councils, on this subject: declining to cite the illustrious names of Wickliffe, Lambert, Tindal, he will produce, in evidence, the judgment of the church of England herself. "The institution of a christian man, made by the *whole clergy* in their provincial synod in the year 1537: set forth by the king and parliament, and commanded to be preached to the whole kingdom," specifies but two orders, bishops, or presbyters, and deacons. "In novo testa-

mento nulla mentio facta est aliorum graduum, aut distinctionum in ordinibus, sed diaconorum, vel ministrorum, et presbyterorum, sive episcoporum." In the new testament no mention is made of any gradations or distinctions, in orders, but of deacons, or servants, (alluding to the import of the Greek original) and elders, or bishops. From the replies "to certain petitions and requests, made by the clergy, of the lower convocation, to the most Rev. father in God, the archbishop of Canterbury's grace, and the residue of the prelates of the higher house, for the furtherance of certain articles," may be selected the answer of archbishop Cranmer himself. "The bishops and priests, or presbyters, were at one time, and were not two things, but both one office, in the beginning of Christ's religion." "In the new testament, he that is appointed to be a bishop or priest needeth no consecration by the scripture; for election, or appointing thereto, is sufficient."

Of the same opinion was the "judicious" Hooker, who, in the third book of his ecclesiastical polity, grounds his arguments on the assumption, that, there is no definite form of church government, specified in the

new testament; and, consequently, that episcopacy cannot be of divine origin.

Burnet, bishop of Salisbury, expressed his agreement in words that may, with propriety, be subjoined. In his vindication of the Church of Scotland he asserts, "I acknowledge bishop and presbyter to be one, and the same office, and so plead for no new office-bearer in the church." Stillingfleet in his Irenicum, argues at length against the jus divinum of episcopacy, and observes in the following terms: "Thus we see, by the testimony chiefly of him, who was instrumental in our reformation, archbishop Cranmer, that he owned not episcopacy, as a distinct order from presbytery, of divine right; but, only, as a *prudent constitution* of the civil magistrate, for the better governing in the church."*

The list of these illustrious names might be prolonged to an indefinite extent, especially by the addition of the distinguished divines of the reformed churches on the continent, were further evidence necessary; and were it compatible with the limits which the writer has assigned to himself. "The truth is,"

* Iren. p. 393.

to employ the language of an intelligent author, "this notion of a jus divinum of episcopacy, as a superior order, was first promoted in the church of England by archbishop Laud. Dr. Holland, the king's professor of divinity, in Oxon, was much offended with Dr. Laud for asserting it, in his disputation for his degrees; he checked him publicly, and told him, he was a schismatic, and went about to make a division between the English and other reformed churches."*

I have now brought to a close those remarks, explanatory and vindicatory, which relate to the constitution of the church, of which this is a memorial: and how far the system of episcopacy can be supported, either by an appeal to the sacred volume, or the earliest and purest records of the church, the reader may now determine for himself. I would however, submit the enquiry to every impartial mind, with what propriety the oft-reiterated declaration is made, that the episcopal established church, is the only one, in these realms, built upon the foundation

* Plea for scripture ordination, p. 115.

of the apostles and prophets. I would ask with what prudence "the challenge is given to *all* opponents to produce evidence, that any form of polity, other than episcopal, has prevailed in the church from the days of apostolic men to the era of the reformation?* I would still further solemnly propose to the judgment and conscience of every candid and spiritual man, with what propriety, the frequent asseveration is obtruded on the public attention, that, the polity which the church of England adopts, and the ministers she employs, are the only legitimate media through which a vital influence can be expected to descend from Him, who is the source of all good to the living branches of his mystical vine: whilst others, "as wild offsets which have sprung up from the scattered fragments of the spreading tree,"† are pitilessly abandoned to the uncovenanted mercies of God. And I would

* See sermon preached at All Saints church, Southampton, Jan. 24, 1836, by the Rev. T. H. Brooke Mountain, M.A. Prebendary of Lincoln—Rector of Blunham, Bedfordshire —Vicar of Hemel Hempstead, Herts—and domestic Chaplain to the Lord Bishop of Gloucester. And now Bishop of Montreal.

† Ibid. p. 12.

Who can read without astonishment, for the author would

finally enquire with what justice in principle, or wisdom in legislation, a compulsory tax is levied by the pains and penalties of the law, upon the property of every rateable subject in England, Ireland, and Wales, whether he be a churchman or dissenter, to support a system of ecclesiastical discipline from which an undoubted majority of inhabitants in the three kingdoms

not use a harsher expression, the following sentence from the pen of this *protestant* bishop, the more than semi-popery of which, might lead us to conclude, that it had been appropriately written by a Chaloner, or a Murray. "But when this awful power, that of immediate inspiration, was withdrawn, the bishops and pastors of the church, were to govern by *canons* and *articles*, and *fixed rules;* and the duty of the people became a canonical obedience, an obedience not to the will of man, but to the laws laid down by the whole body of the church, and administered by its officers. Every act of authority, in conformity with those laws, (that is the canons, articles, and fixed rules) is *binding upon your consciences;* but if any attempt be made to exercise an arbitrary dominion beyond them, you are entitled to refuse submission to it." The intelligent reader will readily perceive what appears to have escaped the notice of the Right rev. writer, that in this sentence the fundamental principle of the reformation, *the perfect sufficiency* and *sole authority* of the sacred scriptures, is abandoned. Such persons require to be reminded of the well-known aphorism of the immortal Chillingworth, "The bible, and the bible alone, is the religion of protestants."

L. of C.

dissent, and which, according to the admission of its most talented defenders, is purely of human invention!*

* The subjoined remarks on this subject, as containing the recorded opinions of that justly celebrated man, Sir Matthew Hale, are not undeserving of notice.

"It is most apparent, that the affixing of the seal of the king of heaven, to any form of government, without a commission from him, is a presumption and crime of a high nature, and such as is derogatory to his glory and truth, in a very high degree; and, therefore, men had need be careful how they coin their own conjectures and imaginations, or, it may be, their own designs, interest, and affectation of power with the stamp of a divine authority; and so much the rather, because, if detected of falsity, (as it is impossible for all the claims of the several pretenders to be true), the damage that comes to religion thereby is scarcely reparable.—*Life of Sir Matthew Hale, by J. B. Williams, esq.* L.L.D and F.S.A.

CHAP. III.

Place of assembling—Rev. N. Robinson first pastor--Rev. Giles Say—Act of Indulgence—Rev. Mr. Bolar—Mr. Watts—His Imprisonment—State of Prisons at that time—Dr. Watts—Birth—Education—Composed his hymns for the use of the church and congregation—Mr. Robert Thorner—Founder of a charity in this town—His letter of dismissal from a church in London—The Rev. Henry Francis—Rev. John Bertram—Rev. W. Kingsbury—Rev. George Clayton—Rev. T. Adkins—Erection of present place of worship—Expenses attending it defrayed by voluntary subscription—Concluding remarks.

As to the *place* in which the church and congregation were accustomed to assemble, it would appear that they were under the necessity of meeting when and where they could, during the persecuting reign of Charles the Second; till some buildings were converted into a public place of worship; in which, as the times would allow, they enjoyed their weekly sabbaths and their monthly sacraments. These buildings, thus appropriated, were on the site of the present chapel, and were rented on a lease, for that pur-

pose, by Mr. Robert Thorner, the pious and munificent founder of the charity that bears his name, in the this town; who, as has been already stated, was an elder of the church, At his death, the interest in the unexpired term of the lease was bequeathed by him, to the church. A memorandum to the following effect, contained in its records, explains and confirms these statements. "July 17, 1690. Mr. Thorner, one of the elders of this church, departed this life, and by his last will and testament, bequeathed to the officers of the church, for the churches' use, the lease of the meeting-house, above the bar, for the remainder of the years to come, (if it shall be so long used as a meeting-house) for the church, with all the appurtenances thereof."

The church, during the troublous times, before referred to, held monthly fasts, at which collections were made for the poor. From these resources, they not only provided relief for the necessitous of their own society, but sent help, by their messengers to the destitute and afflicted in other towns; and, even, to the persecuted brethren in distant parts; amongst which may be specified, to the presbyterians in Ire-

land,* and also to the protestants in France; who, towards the close of the seventeenth century, laboured under sufferings, almost unparalleled, in the history of the world. In the pecuniary transactions of these times, it is highly gratifying to observe, in the different entries which were made, the rigid economy maintained, in their own expenses, whilst so much generosity was evinced towards the necessities of others. Thus, like the churches of Macedonia, " in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy

* The sufferings of the Irish protestants at this period were produced by the following circumstances. After James the Second had abdicated the throne of this country, a strong party adhered to him in the sister kingdom, especially amongst the papists; and the contest for the crown was transferred from England to Ireland. It was not till the year 1691, that the victorious arms of William the Third put an end to the struggle. In the mean time the wretched inhabitants suffered all the horrors of a civil war. Encouraged by the cruelty of the exiled king, the Roman Catholic party, which for a time was dominant, passed the most oppressive laws, confiscated the property of two-thirds of the protestants, and inflicted the greatest cruelties. The presbyterians, as having espoused, most ardently, the cause of civil and religious liberty, in the person of the Prince of Orange, suffered, it may be presumed, to the greatest extent: it was to mitigate the injuries sustained by them, that pecuniary aid was sent from this church.

and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality."

In this place of worship, the church and congregation were accustomed to assemble; and that without molestation, after the revolution of 1688, when liberty of conscience was allowed. The fee-simple of the building, and the adjoining ground, was subsequently purchased by a voluntary subscription, raised amongst the members for that purpose, in the year 1719. In the list of subscribers appear many names familiar in the history of this town.

This place, thus purchased, becoming old, decayed, and, consequently, unsafe, it was, at length, determined to build a new one on the ground on which it stood. In the year 1727, a more commodious building was erected by voluntary subscriptions: this edifice, thus erected, remained, amidst some enlargements and alterations, to which a subsequent reference will be made, till the year 1819; when this, likewise, was removed in its turn to give place to the one now standing on the spot.

The Rev. Mr. Robinson, the first pastor, becoming old and infirm, the church elected the Rev. Mr.

Bolar to be his assistant, and co-pastor. His coadjutor first administered the ordinance of the Lord's supper to the assembled church, on the third of January, 1696. On account of Mr. Robinson's age and infirmities, he was assisted by him some years before his death, as is evident from the joint appearance of their names, with the dates appended in the transactions of the church. His dissolution took place in May, 1696, and, as appears from the parish register, of the church of All Saints, he was interred on the 27th day of that month. From the course of undeviating tranquillity with which the internal affairs of this community were administered,—and the constant accessions to its members, which, even in those discouraging times, were made; it is reasonable to conclude that he was no less distinguished by the conciliatory and active virtues of the christian pastor, than by that moral heroism which enabled him to sacrifice all for Christ. It must be a subject of regret that the documents respecting him are so unsatisfactory, and so few: but though little is known of him on earth, "his witness is in heaven, and his record is on high." To this holy man not only the

protestant dissenters of different denominations, in the town of Southampton, but all its inhabitants, who regard the interests of pure and undefiled religion, are bound to look back with feelings of profound veneration. It was he, who, in this place, opposed, in his own person, and, amidst the greatest sacrifices, an effectual resistance to the usurpations of ecclesiastical tyranny:—it was he, who maintained the incorruptible truths of the gospel, unseduced by the examples of tame compliance, or of dangerous error which were presented on every side. It was he, who, on this spot, planted that tree of religious liberty, which he watered by his tears, and nurtured by his prayers: and which, amidst every effort to strike at its root, or to lop off its branches, has existed to the present day: and could his sainted spirit look down from its state of imperturbable repose, it must, surely, derive a hallowed delight in knowing that the principles of truth and righteousness, which he made such sacrifices to establish, have not been permitted to die.

Of the Rev. Giles Say, who was ejected from St. Michaels, and who was, thus, the fellow-sufferer

with Mr. Robinson, the following particulars may not be uninteresting:—He was born in Southampton, in the year 1632. The family sprang, originally, from Dorsetshire, but removed in consequence of the marriage of the father. On the blank leaf of a bible, which was a present from his brother to himself, a few days before the death of the former, he wrote the following lines: "My mother, who was born in 1588, departed this life in February, 1669. She was of French seed. Her ancestors were protestants. Her father and mother, with several of her relations, fled for religion, out of France, upon a great persecution there, in the beginning of Queen Elizabeth's time, and came and dwelt at Southampton." The maternal family name was Câtell, to whom a considerable estate at Rouen, in Normandy, belonged. In the year 1660, Mr. Say was ordained to the pastoral office, by the hands of the presbytery, at Bishopstoke, a village about seven miles from Southampton. After his ejectment, in 1662, he preached in several places, as opportunity was afforded, for which he was involved in much trouble, and also was imprisoned. He was offered the living of Wellow, if he would

conform, by Colonel Norton, of Southwick, a village where he was accustomed to preach. Sir Thomas Barron, also, of Plaitford, gave him an asylum during this period of persecution, and in his house his eldest daughter was born. Upon the declaration of indulgence in 1672, he opened his house for religious worship, which, accordingly, was licensed at Whitehall, on the second of May, in that year. The original document is still preserved amongst the papers belonging to the family, and is to the following effect, " Charles R.—

" Charles, by the grace of God, King of England and Ireland, defender of the faith, &c. To all mayors, bailiffs, constables, and other our officers, and ministers, civil and military, whom it may concern, greeting. In pursuance of our declaration of the fifteenth of March, 167½, we do hereby permit and license Giles Say, of the congregational persuasion, to be a teacher of the congregation allowed by us, in a room or rooms, in his house, in Southampton, for the use of such as do not conform to the church of England, who are of the persuasion commonly called congregational. With further license and permission to

him, the said Giles Say, to teach in any place, licensed and allowed by us, according to our said declaration; given at our court, at Whitehall, the second day of May, in the 24th year of our reign, 1672.

Say, a teacher,

Signed, Arlington."

On the revocation of this act of indulgence, owing to the clamorous bigotry of the bishops and clergy, such meetings as these which he held, became illegal; and Mr. Say, with others to whom we shall subsequently refer, was thrown, for exercising his ministry, into the common jail of the town. It is not clearly ascertained, when Mr. Say quitted Southampton; but the following entry in the family register seems to prove that he remained there some years after these events.

"Martha Say, junior, was born on the eighth day of December, 1684, in Lord's-lane, next to the Blue Anchor, on the east side:

In Southampton, in the parish of St. Michael."

After the liberty granted by James II. he was chosen pastor of a congregation at Guestwick, in Norfolk, where he continued till his death, April 7th, 1692.

His son, the Rev. Samuel Say, was educated for the ministry, amongst the dissenters, and was, subsequently, called to Westminster, where he succeeded Dr. Calamy, in the place of worship afterwards occupied by Dr. Kippis. The family register, to which reference has already been made, contains a memorandum which may not be uninteresting to the inhabitants of the town in which the event, related, took place. "A plague began in Southampton, the latter end of May, or beginning of June 1665, and continued till November, 1666, before it fully ceased. It is concluded, by the common vote, that there died in it one thousand and somewhat over; but there are, that do affirm, that there died, betwixt fifteen and sixteen hundred. It began in the buildings below Bull Hall, (Bugle Hall), being in the lower end of the back street, by the walnut tree. The last that was reputed to die of the plague, was a youth, that died over St. Michael's prison."

Mr Watts, the father of Dr. Watts, was, at the time to which this narrative refers, a deacon of the church. He was evidently a man of vigorous intellect, considerable information, exalted piety, inflexible prin-

ciple, and every way worthy to be the parent and the pattern of the distinguished individual, who inherited his name and perpetuated his virtues. He was master of a boarding school in his native town, the repute of which was so well established, and widely diffused, that pupils from America and the West Indies were committed to his care. The uncompromising integrity of his religious principles, exposed him to much persecution, and, after the revocation of the act of indulgence, he had the honor to occupy, in more instances than one, and as was the case with the Rev. Mr. Say, a cell in the common prison, for the cause of Christ. After that period he was compelled to leave his wife, children, school, home; and was driven into exile for two years. His son, in his memoranda states, "My father persecuted and imprisoned for nonconformity six months; after that forced to leave his family, and live privately in London for two years." Party prejudice has led some writers to represent the nonconformists, of these times, as ignorant fanatics, averse to monarchial government, and disposed to make common cause with papists, and political incendiaries, to accomplish their revolutionary designs:

never was a baser calumny, forged by malignity, and and propagated by fraud. There have been periods, in the history of their own country, when the non-conformists might almost have dictated their own terms, to the government, if they could so far have compromised their principles as to concur in the designs of papists, or joined in a persecuting crusade against them. The subjoined letter, written by Mr. Watts, to his children, during the period of his unrighteous banishment, as it is an *undesigned*, so it ought to be a *convincing* testimony of the sentiments, spirit, and conduct, that marked these devoted men.

"My dear children,

"Though it hath pleased the only wise God to suffer the malice of ungodly men, the enemies of Jesus Christ (and my enemies for his sake), to break out so far against me, as to remove me from you in my personal habitation, thereby at once bereaving me of that comfort, which I might have hoped for in the enjoyment of my family in peace, and you of that education, which my love as a father and duty as a parent required me to give; yet such are the longings of my soul for your good and prosperity, especially in

spiritual concernments, that I remember you always with myself in my daily addresses to the throne of grace. Though I cannot speak to you, yet I pray for you; and do hope that my God will hear me, and in due time bring me to live again amongst you, if he shall see such a mercy fit to be bestowed on me or you. However, we must endeavour, by patient waiting, to submit to his will without murmuring; and not to think amiss of his chastising us, knowing that all his works are the products of infinite wisdom; his designs are the advancement of his own glory; and his ends towards his people are sanctification and salvation, which, certainly, shall be accomplished at last, however his great providences may seem contrary to it, as to our apprehensions.

"My dear children, since in this my absence from you, it is the desire of one of you (that is, my eldest son), to have a line of counsel from his father, I hope he has but mentioned it as the mouth for himself, and the rest of you, that are in anywise capable of understanding, and that it will be acceptable to you all, and regarded by you: and, therefore, I shall write in general terms to you all that can understand it at

present; and to the rest as they grow up to understand it, if you will keep it, or copy it for them; for though I am not altogether without hopes of seeing you again, yet I am nowise certain of it, all our time being in God's hands; but I would have you know, that you have yet a father that loves you. I am glad to hear such a desire from any of you; and willing heartily to comply with it, so far as my time, and the many disadvantageous circumstances that attend me, will permit; which take as followeth:

"1st. I charge you frequently to read the holy scriptures: and that not as a task or burden laid on you, but get your hearts to delight in them: there are the only pleasant histories which are certainly true, and greatly profitable; there are abundance of precious promises made to sinners, such as you are by nature; there are sweet invitations and counsels of God and Christ, to come in and lay hold of them; there are choice heavenly sayings and sermons of the Son of God, the blessed prophets and apostles. Above all books and writings account the bible the best, read it most, and lay up the truths of it in your hearts: therein is revealed the whole will of God, for

the rule of man's faith and obedience, which he must believe and do, to be holy here and happy hereafter. Let all the knowledge and learning you attain, by other books, both at school and at home, be improved, as servants, to help you the better to understand God's word, in all the several tongues wherein you read it. I am the larger upon this head, because therein you may come to know your duty to God and man; and indeed, the sum of all the counsels I can give you, necessary for the regulating of your behaviour towards God and man, in every station, place and condition of your lives, is contained in that blessed word of God, which pronounceth a blessing to those that read and hear it, and keep the things that are therein written.

2dly. Consider, seriously and often, of the sinful and miserable estate you are in by nature, from the guilt of original sin, which came in by the fall of our first parents; also of the increasing of that guilt by your own transgressions, and that you are liable to eternal wrath thereupon; also think of the way of fallen man's recovery by grace, according to the foundation-principles of the true Christian religion, which you

have learned in your catechism; and beg of God, by prayer, to give you understanding in them, and faith to believe in Jesus Christ, and an heart willing to yield obedience to his gospel commands in all things.

"Though you cannot tell how to pray as you should do, nor in any order, yet be not afraid nor ashamed to try. Go aside, my dear children, and think in your minds, what it is that you want to make you holy and happy. Tell God that you want pardon of sin, a soft, tender, and sanctified heart, a portion of the spirit, &c.; and then beg God to help you to pray for those things, and to teach you to pray, and to pardon the iniquities of your prayers. My children, though it may want a form of words, yet if the heart be in it, this is prayer, and such a prayer too as God will hear and accept; for he despises not the day of small things, nor little ones, but loves to see them come and tell him what they would have. Tell him you would pray better, but you cannot, till he pleases to help you. My children, if you do but use this way, you shall find that in time you will come to have praying gifts and praying graces too; 'for to them that ask it shall be given.' It will be

your excellency, your honor, and your great profit, to begin betimes to be praying Christians. Prayer is the character of a child of God, the best remedy for soul diseases, and the best weapon for a saint's defence! 'God will pour out his wrath upon them that call not on his name.'

"3dly. Learn to know God, according to the discoveries he hath made of himself in and by his word, in all his glorious attributes and infinite perfections; especially learn to know him, in and through the Lord Jesus Christ, and to be acquainted with this blessed Redeemer of God's elect, who hath paid so great a price as his own blood for the ransom of your souls; thereby satisfying Divine Justice, purchasing peace and reconciliation for sinners. Labour to believe that this was done for your souls; and look upon yourselves bound, as the Lord's redeemed, to walk in all holy conversation and godliness. Know, that if Jesus Christ had not come and suffered in the flesh, thereby undertaking and accomplishing the work of redemption, there had been no remedy; but you must have perished for ever!'

4th. Remember that God is your Creator, from

whom you received life and being; and, as such, you are bound to worship him; much more when you consider that he is your Benefactor, from the fountain of whose goodness all your mercies come. Now, upon both these accounts, the best of your time and abilities are required in his service; and the earlier you begin to devote yourselves to his service, the abler you will be to perform it acceptably, the greater will be your honor here, and your glory hereafter; though you must not expect to merit aught at his hands, by way of merit for what you can do, yet certain it is, that Jesus Christ will reward every one according to his works; and we are bidden to look to the recompense of reward, in that sense after Moses's example; and it is no small commendation and honor to be an old disciple of Christ.

"5th. Know this, that as you must worship God, so it must be in his own ways, with true worship and in a right manner; that is, according to the rules of the gospel, and not according to the inventions or traditions of men. Consider that idolatry and superstition are both abominable to God. Now idolatry is the worshipping of idols, images, pictures, or an

creatures or representations, as the heathens do: or crucifixes and consecrated bread, as the papists do. Either to worship these as God, or to worship God by and under them, as the children of Israel did the golden calf, or to worship God in a false manner—is idolatry; and no idolators must enter heaven. Superstition is to make additions of ordinances or ceremonies to God's worship, more than he hath appointed, though they have ever so fair pretences for them. Take heed, my children, of these things. It is not enough to say, that such things are not forbidden in scripture; but you must see whether they are commanded there, or else obey them not.

"6th. Entertain not in your hearts any of the popish doctrines, of having more mediators than one, namely, the Lord Jesus; of praying to the Virgin Mary, or any other saints or angels, for saints and angels, though in heaven, yet they are creatures, and prayer is a divine worship, due to none but God the Father, Son, and Spirit: also avoid their doctrine of meriting by works of obedience, for there is some sin that pollutes our best duties, and we can deserve nothing at God's hand but wrath: all the good we re-

ceive comes of his free grace. Their doctrine also of purgatory is abominable; for there is no middle place for souls to go to—there is only heaven and hell: also their doctrine, that the pope can forgive sins, is a lie, for he is a wicked man himself, and must go to hell, unless God forgive him: also their turning the bread into the very body of Jesus Christ, by a priest's words—this is a falsehood and notorious idolatry. Many other erroneous and damnable doctrines they own, which I cannot enlarge upon; but you must receive no doctrine, but such as is rightly built upon the holy scriptures. My children, pray to God to give you the knowledge of the truth, and to keep you from error; for it is a very dangerous time you are like to live in.

7th. Do not entertain any hard thoughts of God, or of his ways, because his people are persecuted for them; for Jesus Christ himself was persecuted to death by wicked men, for preaching the truth and doing good, and the holy apostles and prophets were cruelly used for serving God in his own way. The wicked ones of the world are the seed of the serpent, and they will always hate the people of God, tor-

ment, and seek to destroy them; and God suffers them to do so, not for want of love to his people, but to purge their sins by chastisement, to try their graces, and fit them for heaven, till the wicked have filled up the measure of their iniquities, and many other holy reasons: therefore, if you should come to live very poor, for the gospel's sake, be contented with it, and bless God for every mercy you receive, and know this, that poor ones are heirs of glory as well as rich ones.

"Lastly, I charge you to be dutiful and obedient to all your superiors: to your grandfather and both grandmothers, and all other relations and friends that are over you, but in an especial manner to your mother, to whose care and government God hath wholly committed you in my absence; who, as I am sure, dearly loves you, so she will command and direct you to her utmost ability, in all ways, for your good of soul and body. Consider, she is left alone to bear all the burden of bringing you up; and is, as it were, a widow; her time is filled up with many cares, and, therefore, do not grieve her by any rebellious or disobedient ways; but be willing to learn of

her and be ruled by her, that she may have some comfort in seeing your obedient carriage; and it will rejoice me to hear it. Avoid bad company of wicked children; abhor swearing, lying, and playing on the sabbath-day, and all other wicked courses; so shall you grow in favour with God and man. Love one another. You that are eldest, help to teach the younger; and you that are younger, do not scorn the teachings of the elder. These things I charge and command you with the authority and love of a father. Now commending you to God, and what I have written to his blessing upon your hearts, through Jesus Christ, with my dear love to your mother, my duty to your grandfather and grandmothers, and love to all other friends, being indifferent in health, I rest your very loving father,

"Isaac Watts.

"London, the 21st of May, 1685."

Of such men as these was this church of Christ at Southampton, at that time, composed: men whose lofty sentiments, and generous feelings, comported with those embodied in the preceding letter, but who were, nevertheless, by the oppression of religious into-

lerance, driving into exile, or thrown into loathsome dungeons.*

The imprisonment of Mr. Watts took place during the infancy of his son Isaac. A tradition was perpetuated in the family, that, during the period of his confinement, the sorrowing, and almost widowed mother, has sometimes placed herself on a stone, in

* The general state of our prisons, both at this period, and long subsequently, till the philanthrophy of Howard forced it upon public attention, may be estimated, not alone from the fact that it generated, very frequently, a tremendous disease, thence denominated the gaol fever, but from the particular description of some of these places afforded by those, who, as the victims of religious persecution, were immured within their walls. The subjoined extract, from the journal of George Fox, the distinguished member of the society of friends, may give the reader some conception of the sufferings to which, he, in common with others, was exposed: whilst those parts which portray, most strikingly, the state of these prisons are suppressed, as too offensive to meet the public eye. "The gaoler put us into Doomsdale, (a cell in the prison at Launceston) a nasty, stinking place, where they used to put murderers, after they were condemned. The place was so noisome that it was observed, that few that went in, did ever come out again in health. It was all like mire, and, in some places, to the top of the shoes in water and filth. He would not let us cleanse it, nor suffer us to have beds or straw to lie on. At night, some friendly people of the town, brought us a candle and a little

front of the cell in which her husband was confined, to impart to the child, thus cradled in affliction, the warm nutriment from her maternal breast. Brighter days, however, dawned upon the sire and the son: the history of the latter is universally known; and the former, having outlived these times of persecution, had the hallowed satisfaction of seeing the principles,

straw, and we went to burn a little of the straw to take away the stink. The thieves lay over our heads, and the head-gaoler, in a room, by them, over our heads also. It seems that the smoke went up into the room, where the gaoler lay, which put him into such a rage that he poured filth from the room of the thieves, through a hole upon our heads, in Doomsdale, till we were so bespattered, that we could not touch ourselves, nor one another. And the stink increased upon us, so that what with stink, and what with smoke, we had like to have been choked and smothered: he having quenched our straw with what he poured down had made a great smother in the place. In this manner we were obliged to stand all night, for we could not sit down, the place was so full of filth. A great while he kept us, after this manner, before he would let us cleanse it, or suffer us to have any victuals brought in, but what we got through the grate."

From the description afforded of other prisons, by the same individual, we learn what attention was paid to the health, comfort, and morality of the prisoners. As to *morality*, men and women were huddled together in the same cell: as to *cleanliness*, they were covered with filth and vermin; as to *comfort*, they had no chimney, fire-place, nor, consequently,

for which he had suffered, gain the ascendancy, in the reign of the house of Brunswick; and, also, to witness that son, the morning of whose day was veiled in darkness and storms, shine forth in the meridian splendour of his learning, piety, and renown.

Isaac was the eldest child of his parents, and was born in July 17, 1674, as appears from an entry

fire, even in the depth of winter. In one of these places Fox declares that "the wind drove in the rain forcibly, so that the water came over his bed, and ran about the room, that he was fain to skim it with a platter." His body, by these means, was "numbed with cold, and his fingers swelled so, that one was as large as two." At another time he states, "I was put into a tower, where the smoke of the other prisoners came up so thick, it stood as dew upon the walls, and sometimes it was so thick that I could hardly see the candle when it burned; and I, being locked under three locks, the under-gaoler, when the smoke was great, would hardly be persuaded to come up to unlock one of the uppermost doors for fear of the smoke, so that I was almost smothered. Besides it rained in upon my bed, and many times when I went to stop out the rain, in the cold winter season, my shirt was as wet as muck, with the rain that came in upon me, whilst I was labouring to stop it out. And the place being high and open to the wind, sometimes, as fast I stopped it, the wind blew it out again. In this manner did I lie all that long cold winter, till the next assize; in which time I was so starved with cold and rain, that my body was greatly swelled, and my limbs much benumbed." The gaolers, were

made in the records belonging to the church, in which, also, are contained the registry of the birth of eight other children, four sons and four daughters. He was educated at the grammar school of the town then under the mastership of the Rev. Mr. Pinhorne, rector of All Saints, Southampton, prebendary of Leckford, and vicar of Eling, Hants. He appears to have been a man of real excellence of character and varied erudition. Early discovering the precocious talent of his pupil he fostered it by every means of justifiable stimulation. He thus secured the respect and gratitude of this aspiring genius, which was long cherished by him, and publicly expressed by a latin

in many instances, hardened ruffians; who were, literally, branded in their own persons, with the marks of public infamy.

The present improvement in the condition and discipline of our prisons—the amelioration in the severity of our penal code—the employment, in one word, of punishment, not for vindictive, but corrective purposes; are a few of those multiplied forms, in which the searching spirit of christian benevolence, has, in modern times, first detected, and then mitigated, the evils of suffering humanity: and are, also, indications of the sure, though tardy advancement of the world, to that period of prophetic delineation, when man shall cease to be a wolf to man.

pindaric ode addressed to his former master in after years. Mr. Pinhorne died in the year 1714, and a monument erected in the church-yard at Eling, where he was buried, bears an inscription to his memory.

The ardent piety, the versatile talent, the varied learning, and extensive usefulness of Dr. Watts have been so often described, and are so well known, that an extensive reference to him, in this summary view of the history of the church, into whose bosom he, as an infant, was received, would be equally unnecessary and misplaced.*

It was for the benefit, in the first instance, of the church, the brief memorials of which are now before the eye of the reader, that Dr. Watts composed many, if not most, of his "hymns and spiritual songs." The occasion of his writing them appears to have been the following: during a residence of two years under the

* By no biographer has such justice been done to the memory of this eminent man, as by the Rev. Thomas Milner, A.M., whose work entitled "The Life, Times, and Correspondence of Isaac Watts, D.D. affords an example of patient research, accurate statement, copious and masterly delineation. To this volume the writer is happy to express his obligation for several of the facts embodied in the preceding narrative, relating to this church of Christ.

parental roof at Southampton, from about the year 1691, to 1693, the metrical compositions, used in the public services of the sanctuary, and which, it may be presumed, were not the most soft and flowing in their numbers, offended his well-tuned ear. On complaining of them to his father, the latter urged him to endeavour, by compositions of his own, to surpass what he thus disapproved. The first essay was so successful, and so much to the taste of the worshippers, for whose use it was composed, that a second was called for, then a third, and a fourth, till, by degrees, a sufficient number was produced to form a volume, which, accordingly, was published in the year 1707. "Thus," to use the language of a writer, to whom a recent reference has been made, "the offence given to his refined taste, and critical ear, by the homely psalmody of Southampton, led to the composition of the spiritual songs; and now, wherever the praises of the God of grace are celebrated, in the early sanctuaries of christian lands, the kraal of the wandering Caffre, and the habitation of the far distant Polynesian, they are known, admired, and sung."

In the year 1690, died Mr. Robert Thorner, who, as has been stated, was an elder of this church, and the beneficient founder of the charity in this town which bears his honoured name.* He was a man of eminent piety, of irreproachable conduct, and extensive benevolence. He had resided, in earlier life, as a merchant, in the metropolis, where, by the blessing of providence on his labours, he accumulated a considerable property, which he faithfully employed for the glory of the giver, and the good of mankind. He was a member of an Independent church in London, under the pastoral care of the Rev. George Griffiths, M.A., who was ejected by the act of uniformity from the charter house, and also from a lectureship at St.

* The property left by Mr. Thorner, consists of houses &c. in Leadenhall Market, London. The profits arising from this are appropriated, according to the will of the donor, to the support of a school, at Litton, near Dorchester, to the apprenticing of boys at Salisbury and Southampton, whose respective masters receive five pounds, at the time of their being apprenticed, and they themselves five pounds, each, at its termination: and also to the erection and endowment of the charity, before referred to, which contains at present, twenty-eight respectable widows, as inmates, who receive a weekly allowance of four shillings. The resident trustee is the present pastor of the church.

Bartholomew, near the exchange; after this event, he exercised his ministry at Girdler's Hall. The health of Mr. Thorner becoming infirm, he resorted for its restoration, to the quietude and salubrity of a rural residence; and chose Badesley, in the vicinity of Southampton, as his place of retreat. The document containing his dismissal from the church in the metropolis, of which he was a member, to the kindred society at Southampton, is still extant. This letter it is deemed expedient to insert, as it is at once, an honourable testimony to the excellency of the man to whom it refers; an illustration of the mode of procedure then employed, and still perpetuated, amongst congregational churches, on occasions of a similar nature; and, also, a practical exposition of the import of the apostles enquiry contained in 1 Cor. iii. 4. "Need we as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you?"

"Brethren, beloved in the Lord,

"Grace, mercy, and peace, be unto you, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Whereas, Mr. Thorner, having several years since, given up himself to the Lord, and to us

by his will, and during all those years walked worthy of that holy profession among us, and in order to his sitting down with us, he made, and indeed obtained help of God to render himself, in and by the occasional exercise of his gifts and graces, exemplarily useful, and a special blessing to our whole fellowship; insomuch as that he hath been singularly beloved by us:—and, whereas, now some infirmities, incident to his years, have disabled him from living in this city, and the providence of our gracious God hath cast his lot in that vicinity where that church, the pastor whereof the Rev. Mr. Robinson is, does usually assemble itself;—and, whereas, this, our beloved brother Thorner, hath hereupon desired a letter of dismission from us to you, we do, and, indeed, cannot but answer this desire of his; and though our thus doing be to us a considerable loss, yet we would rejoice in that prospect, that by faith we have, of that great gain that this our loss to you will be: for, we doubt not, that though his works amongst us, gave him, as that manner of life that those elders, the apostle speaks of, lived, gave them, *a good report*; or have made him meet, as they were, to be well testified

unto:—the God of all grace, yet, will cause it to be with him, as with the church of Thyatira, it was, of whom our Lord Jesus Christ says that he knew her works of charity, service, faith, and patience; and and that concerning them he also knew that their last were more than their first: what remains then but that you thankfully receive him, as that special gift of love that Jesus Christ hath bestowed on you, for an help towards the building of you up in your most holy faith.

"Brethren pray for us, as ye are prayed for by that little church, in whose name and with whose consent, we subscribe ourselves,

"Your brethren and companions in the kingdom and patience of Christ.

"George Griffith, *Pastor.*

"Joshua Brook and Michael Watts, *Deacons.*

"London, the 17th day of the 7th month, 1688.

"For that church, the pastor whereof Mr. Robinson is, meeting in Southampton."

The Rev. Mr. Bolar continued in the full exercise of his pastoral office, from the death of Mr. Robinson, till August 19, 1726; when the Rev. Mr. Francis

was appointed co-pastor with him. Mr. Bolar died September 25, 1734. Of the third pastor in succession a more explicit account need not be afforded than is contained in the subjoined extract from "Wilson's History of Dissenting Churches."* "Upon Mr. Wood's undertaking the morning service at the Weigh-house, his place was supplied at New-court, by the Rev. Henry Francis. This gentleman, it is apprehended, was a native of Wales, and born about the year 1690. He pursued his studies for the ministry, at an academy of great repute, at Tewkesbury, in Gloucestershire, kept by the learned Mr. Samuel Jones. At this seminary he had for his fellow-student, Mr. Thomas Secker, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury,† who, in a letter to Dr. Watts, written when he was only eighteen years of age, speaks of Mr. Francis as one who was 'diligent in study, and truly religious.' As he had been at no other academy, he was several years under Mr. Jones' tuition, and

* Vol. iii. page 502.

† To whom may be added the names of Butler, afterwards bishop of Durham, author of "Analogy," and Dr. Samuel Chandler, who all received their education at the same time under the tuition of this distinguished scholar and dissenter.

during that time, gained a competent knowledge of the learned languages. He also attended to the study of the Belles Letters, and went through a course of lectures on Jewish Antiquities, and other points preparatory to a critical study of the Bible. Having finished his studies, he removed to London, and about 1718, was chosen to assist Mr. Foxon, at Girdler's-hall. In the following year, he joined the subscribing ministers at the Salter's-hall synod, and stood forward a zealous opposer of the Arian doctrine. Mr. Fox dying in 1723, Mr. Francis preached and published a funeral sermon for him from Heb. xi., 4. About this time he left Girdler's-hall, and supplied Mr. Wood's place in the morning at New-court, till 1726, when he removed to Southampton, to be co-pastor with the Rev. William Bolar, whom he succeeded in the whole service, and continued in that situation till his death, November the 7th, 1752, aged about sixty-three years. His funeral sermon was preached by Mr. William Johnson, then of Romsey, and afterwards of Taunton. Mr. Francis left behind him the character of the gentleman, the christian, and the scholar. He was blessed with a plea-

sant temper, which was greatly enriched by divine grace. The evening of his life was calm, and his sun set without a cloud. Mr. Kingsbury, his respectable successor at Southampton, in a letter to the author, says, ' From some manuscripts left behind him, he appears to have been an excellent biblical scholar and critic; and from his written sermons an accurate, evangelical, and affectionate preacher.' Mr. Francis was an intimate friend and correspondent of the celebrated Dr. Watts, who, in a letter to him, dated March 10, 1728-9, persuades his continuance at Southampton; and expresses himself in sentiments of the warmest affection and esteem."*

* The author had once in his possession, for a short time, as a loan from the late Matthew Rolleston, esq. of the Isle of Wight, an autograph diary of Mr. Francis; comprehending, to the best of his recollection, almost the whole of the lengthened period through which his pastoral life extended: and containing, not merely a record of the operations of his own mind on subjects of a religious nature, but also a brief reference to the most important events occurring, during that time, in the church, over which he presided, and the town in which he lived. This document was interesting and instructive in many particulars, and in one especially, that of the hand-writing of its author, which presented the change from the beautiful penmanship of the juvenile writer, through all its intermediate gradations, down to the expressive cha-

The Rev. Henry Francis was succeeded by the Rev. John Bertram, who continued from the year 1753, till 1763; when he removed to a living in Scotland. For some months, after his departure, there was no settled pastor, till the latter end of the year 1764; when the Rev. William Kingsbury was chosen to fulfil that office. The personal knowledge which the writer of this possesed of that excellent man was very limited, as he resigned his office and left the town, more than a year before he had the honor to become his successor in office. From the published memorials of him, by his estimable friend Mr. Bullar,

racter made by the tremulous hand of age: thus exhibiting, as on a dial, in one view, the gradual transit of human life. The diary, he has reason to believe, fell, after the death of Mr. Rolleston, into the hands of a surviving member of his family. The author of this has made some unsuccessful attempts to ascertain its present existence, as well as to obtain, either the loan, or the gift of it, as a valuable relic belonging to the church. He inserts this note as a memorandum of the fact referred to, and as a guide to some future enquiry. Mr. Rolleston, who remained a nonconformist to the close of his life was a descendant of a family of that name, of great respectability, once resident in Southampton, and connected with the church of which this is the memorial. By one of his ancestors the chapel-house was given in trust, for the benefit of the minister.

as well as from the testimony of those who knew his worth, whilst he was living, and cherish with veneration his memory, the author rejoices to record, that he appears to have been a man of exalted piety, of sound learning, and a profound divine. He was eminently conciliatory in his spirit, unblemished in his reputation: and, in the several relations of husband, father, friend, and pastor, not often equalled, much less surpassed. Mr. Kingsbury was born July 12, 1744, in London, and received his education, first at Merchant Taylor's School, and afterwards at Christ's Hospital, where he continued three years. In October, 1758, when he had attained his fifteenth year, he was admitted, as a boarder, into the academy for the education of ministers of the Independent denomination at Mile End, then under the joint tuition of Drs. Conder, Walker, and Gibbons. "At the early age of twenty-one," writes his biographer "Mr. Kingsbury was placed in the responsible situation of a christian pastor, at Southampton. A situation, in which nearly five and forty of the subsequent years of his life,

He ran his godly race;
Nor ever changed, or wished to change his place.
Unskilful he to fawn, or seek for power,
By doctrines fashioned to the varying hour:
Far other aims his heart had learned to prize,
More bent to raise the wretched, than to rise.

"When Mr. Kingsbury first entered on his pastoral office, the congregation was very small, and the church members were only twenty-seven. Prejudice and illiberality, also, in this town ran high: and with that unchristian bigotry, which is now growing somewhat obsolete, pointed the finger of scorn at the conscientious separatist; whose sincerity of conduct, and whose sacrifice of feeling, had he possessed no higher title to candid judgment, ought to have sheltered him at least from insult."

In the year 1801, the increasing age and infirmities of the venerated pastor, rendering such a procedure highly expedient, measures were taken to secure for him efficient aid in the discharge of his sacred duties. The temper of mind in which a suggestion to that effect was received by him may be inferred from a touching letter addressed to the church and congregation, and contained in their records:

extracts from which, may, with propriety, be introduced.

" June 15, 1801.

" My dear friends,

" If I am not much deceived, next to the eternal welfare of my own soul, and of my family, nothing lies with greater weight on my heart, than the true prosperity and peace of this church and congregation. I can say, with some measure of the great apostles sincerity, and affection, ' I would very gladly spend and be spent for you, because ye are dear unto me.' Though I am conscious to myself of many infirmities and defects; of much sinfulness and defilement, in all my services, for which I am humbled before God, and need pardon through the blood of our dear Saviour; yet I can boldly say, I have honestly and diligently laboured for the benefit of my flock, not only in my public work, but in my private researches, meditations, and prayers: and have rejoiced as a parent for his family's support, when I could bring home any suitable supplies of new knowledge into my treasury, with this thought, now I have got something more for my dear people. In this way have I

been constantly supplied, through the good hand of my God upon me, for thirty-six years and a half; in serving the congregation which have assembled in this place; most of them are gone to witness either for or against their minister: there are but few that remain. At length I feel my *physical* strength decline, and I am unable to continue all the services, in which I have, heretofore, been cheerfully employed, without a degree of exhaustion I know not how to describe; and which, I fear, has at times been painful to my hearers. As my great master will not lay more upon his servants than they are able to bear, I persuade myself you would not wish 'your servant for his sake, to be broken down with fatigue,' and to be 'burdened, out of measure, beyond strength.'"

* * * * * * *

"I have been informed that it has been in the hearts of some of my kind friends, to consider measures for providing a suitable assistant. The spirit and manner in which the hint of such an expedient has been brought forward to me, has been, in no degree, painful or forbidding; on the other hand, it has been respectful, affectionate, and attended with such de-

clarations of the acceptableness of my ministry, as have been gratifying to my heart. Had the proposal arisen from dissatisfaction with me or my services :— from a love of novelty or change, &c., it would have been painful; but so far as I can understand, at present, it proceeds from kindness to myself, and a pure regard to the interests of Christ and souls, in this ancient church.—Scarcely any thing would give me greater pleasure than to see a pious, able, faithful, laborious minister among you: who might serve with me 'as a son with a father,' during my continuance: scarcely any thing would more rejoice my heart than the prospect of your being unanimously attached to a minister who might take the office of pastor on my removal.—May the great head of the church guide you in all your deliberations by his word and spirit, and bless you with unanimity and peace, prays your brother, friend, and servant, for Christ's sake,

"William Kingsbury."

The almost apostolic zeal, the pastoral tenderness, the christian humility, the sinking of self,—which breathe, in every line, of this admirable letter, need no comment, and place the undisguised charac-

ter of him that wrote it, in its most winning attitude before the reader's eye. Measures were, accordingly, taken to obtain for him a suitable assistant, which ended in the invitation of the Rev. George Clayton, now of Walworth, to that office: the cordial acceptance of which he expressed in a letter addressed to the church and congregation, dated March 1, 1802.

The union, thus effected, between the aged pastor and the youthful assistant lasted two years, and was terminated by an act of resignation on the part of the latter, in January, 1804. During its continuance, it appears to have been the occasion of evincing, on the one side, how mellowed piety could look with complacency on the merited popularity with which youth and talent crowned his coadjutor: and, on the other, it afforded a no less pleasing spectacle, how, amidst the seducing tendency of human applause, the favoured and favorite preacher, could, with filial submission, listen to the counsels, and emulate the example of his paternal friend. The union, whilst it lasted, was honourable to all parties, and when it terminated, appears to have left, in the minds of the friends of religion in the town of Southampton,

a feeling of sincere regret. The residence of the Rev. George Clayton was an epoch, of no small importance, in the history of the church: as the popularity of his address, excited general attention, and induced multitudes to listen to the gospel from his lips. The increase of the congregation rendered an enlargement of the place of worship necessary, which was accordingly effected, in the year 1802, at the cost of about fourteen hundred pounds, and which was promptly raised by a voluntary subscription amongst themselves. The public services of religion during the course of enlargement, were conducted in the Long Rooms, from August 29th, 1802, to May 1st, 1803; when the more commodious sanctuary was re-opened by a sermon from the lips of the senior pastor, on Zechariah, viii. 3.

After the resignation of the Rev. George Clayton, as an assistant, the Rev. Mr. Lacy was invited to sustain the office of copastor. He entered upon this office in June, 1805, and remained in it, till the close of the year 1807; when he resigned his situation for the pastoral charge of an Independent church at Westbury, Wilts. Various ministers were invited as

supplies after this event, with reference to the co-pastorate; amongst whom may be specified Mr. Innes, afterwards of Camberwell; Dr. Raffles, now of Liverpool; till the year 1809, when the Rev. Mr. Kingsbury, feeling the infirmities of age increasing upon him, and unable to grapple with some difficulties and trials, which at that time, existed in the church, was induced to resign his charge. This act of resignation was contained in a letter still preserved amongst the records of the church: and embodies sentiments of a solemn and affecting nature, expressed in language most adapted to impress the mind. On the termination of his pastoral charge, this venerable servant of God, who had thus spent nearly five and forty years in the service of this church, during which period he devoted to its interests, his time and talents, his energies of body and of mind, retired to Caversham, a village near to Reading, in Berkshire, where he passed, in quietude and eminent spirituality of mind, the remaining years of his life. Here, communing with his reconciled Father, and his Son Jesus Christ; moving in a small circle of endeared relatives and friends, "he lived beyond the common walks of

life, quite on the verge of heaven." Even here his habits of active devotedness to the cause of the master, whom he loved, did not desert him; and as opportunities were presented to him, and his enfeebled strength would allow, he employed himself in the neighbourhood in which he lived, in the public services of the sanctuary. His life was protracted amongst accumulated and increasing infirmities of body, though his intellectual eye seemed almost undimmed to the close, when in 1808, the door of eternity was gently opened before him, and "an abundant entrance was administered to him into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." "On the Sunday before he died," observes his biographer, "when his son said, 'how do you do sir?' he replied, 'Well, for I have peace with God.' He expressed an earnest wish to obtain his dismission: and frequently was heard to say, 'When will He come: Oh, when will He come." One of his attendants, supposing him to enquire after his son, Mr. T. Kingsbury, who was hourly expected from London, said, 'we look for him every minute.' He shook his head, saying, 'No, no, when will my beloved come?'

His senses were retained to the last moment of his life. He kissed the hand of his affectionate and only remaining daughter. He made a sign that his son Walter should offer prayer, and in about seven in the evening, on the 18th of February, the happy man, his hands and his eyes lifted up in the attitude of devotion, drew a long breath, and, without a groan or convulsion, expired." The deacons of the Independent church, at Southampton, and another friend, as the last act of their steady and faithful attachment, represented his late congregation, in attending the remains of their venerated pastor to the grave.

In the early part of the year 1810, the present pastor, who at that time was pursuing his studies for the ministry in the college at Hoxton, now removed to Highbury, was requested to visit Southampton, as a supply to the then widowed church. Acceding to regulations, which were made for him by the tutors and directors of the college, and the deacons of this church, he preached his first sermon in this place, on the first day of April, 1810. The visit, which continued for only three weeks, was followed, at the request of the church, by another, in

the ensuing August, and which was protracted to six weeks. This was also succeeded by a third, commencing at the ensuing Christmas, and extending to three months, at the expiration of which period, he received a call to the exercise of the pastoral office.

The accommodations in the place of worship, enlarged during the temporary residence of the Rev. George Clayton, not being deemed sufficient for the numbers, that from the divine blessing on the ministry, were induced to hear, a meeting of several friends and subscribers, was held in the vestry of the chapel, on January 30th, 1818: when it was unanimously resolved, that it was the opinion of those present, that additional accommodation was desirable, for those who were solicitious to attend. In the commencement of the undertaking, the desires and expectations of the friends, thus convened, appeared to be limited to the *enlargement* of the then existing place of worship. Subscriptions were accordingly solicited for that object; and a plan and estimates, with reference to the projected enlargement, were obtained from a talented surveyor. It ought, however, to be mentioned as a striking coincidence in the

course of divine providence, and as evincing that the seed, which many years before, was sown by the former venerated pastor, was made to flourish, even on his grave; that, it was during the progress of the journey of the deacons, to which a reference has already been made, to be present at the interment of that man of God, that the question of an entirely *new edifice*, instead of an enlargement, was made the subject of conversation amongst themselves. Then it was asked, why, instead of expending the resources of the church and congregation, on a decayed and incommodious building, should not a new one be reared? Then it was, that a devoted officer of the church, now translated to the world of spirits, the late Mr. Colborne, tendered, conditionally, as his first donation to the object, the sum of one hundred pounds. The idea, once proposed for consideration, met with general, nay almost enthusiastic acceptance. Subscriptions, intended first for an enlargement of the former place of worship, were cheerfully multiplied, perhaps in some instances, even fourfold, for the purposes of a new structure: and the circumstances attending the case, presented so encouraging an aspect, that the friends of religion,

in this place, acting for the occasion, felt themselves justified, in abandoning their former limited purpose, and in adopting one on a larger scale. Plans of chapels, recently erected, of which a good report had been made, were obtained: one especially from Liverpool, occupied by the congregation under the pastoral care of the Rev. Dr. Raffles, and which, with some modifications, was finally adopted. The plan being determined on, and specifications made, tenders were invited with reference to the proposed erection, from builders of accredited respectability in the Town. The one made by Messrs. Roe and Son was approved, as being the lowest, in which the parties engaged to build a place of worship, according to the submitted plan and specifications, and on a scale of eighty feet long, by fifty-six in width, for the sum of three thousand six hundred pounds, including the materials contained in the former building. On the first day in April, 1819, the foundation stone was laid by the present pastor, who at the same time, delivered an address suited to the occasion. The new chapel being completed, it was devoted to the worship of God, by appropriate services, on the 26th of April, 1820,

when a sermon was preached in the morning, by the Rev. W. Jay, of Bath, and also one in the evening, by the Rev. George Clayton. It should be observed, that the present building was erected on a spot of ground, in the rear of that occupied by the former one; in consequence of which, the congregation was able to assemble as usual, without inconvenience or dispersion, till within six weeks of its completion. During the latter period of time, it was accommodated, by friendly arrangements made with the Baptist church and congregation, with the means of public worship in the chapel in East-street.

To those who regard the operations of the hand of God, the construction of the edifice, to which this reference is made, with the circumstances with which it was associated, afford abundant materials for instruction and gratitude. The TIME in which the undertaking was commenced, appears to have been the most opportune. A larger number of persons, possessed of considerable affluence, and who were favourable to the object, were then associated, than at any subsequent period; without whose approbation and aid, the attempt would have been adventurous, or imprudent.

The spirit of *union* which also prevailed then, and which, through the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit, continues to prevail, is another important fact that, whilst it indicated the presence of God in his church, was essential to the prudent commencement, and successful completion, of so important a measure. Few events, connected with this work, are more apparent, or more obviously claim a grateful remembrance, than the uninterrupted harmony of feeling and action, which, from the beginning to the end of this transaction, have marked every step of its procedure. The erection of the *material* edifice has not been effected on the ruins of the peace of the spiritual one: but, like the temple of old, the bringing together of its component parts has been without the distracting noise of the axe and the hammer of religious contention. It was begun in peace—it was carried on in peace—it was ended in peace—and the writer would say, in reference to it, at the close, "Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces: for my brethren and companions sakes, I will now say, peace be within thee."

Nor should the author omit to mention, for the

honor of God, and the encouragement of the church, the spirit of devotion and prayer in which this procedure has been conducted. This tended to sanctify the motives of those engaged in the undertaking: to diffuse and perpetuate a spirit of peace; and to secure the divine approbation upon the whole.

The absence of a sectarian spirit, is likewise another fact, which, from his intimate acquaintance with the temper of those most implicated in the work, the writer can thus publicly and unhesitatingly avow. Attached as are the parties, on principle, from reflection, and, as has been proved, on most satisfactory grounds, to the views which they take of the constitution and discipline of the church of Christ; yet it was not, as a primary object, to give additional currency to those views, that this edifice was erected; but, apart from all questions of a merely ritual nature, to obtain the means of exhibiting, to a larger number of willing auditors, the life-giving truths of inspiration; "the glorious gospel of the blessed God." Hence, in its commencement, during its progress, and at its conclusion, liberal donations have been received, from pious and benevolent individuals, of

different religious denominations, who have been convinced of the benevolent nature of the object, and whose spirit has risen above the sordid ground of sectarian prejudice, into a region of love to the universal church.

It is to these combined causes to which, under the divine blessing, may be ascribed so much of the spirit of *pecuniary* liberality that has been practically evinced. Benevolence has had large demands made upon it, and it has, as efficiently, responded to the appeal. Facts have proved that it was not a mountain torrent of religious enthusiasm, rushing on with temporary impetuosity, and soon exhausting itself; but the steady, equable flow of christian principle; and, which, consequently, continued to pour forth its streams as long as the necessity for them existed. Without this *principle* of benevolence, the momentous undertaking could hardly have been achieved. The amount of the expenditure was necessarily large: the original contract was augmented, by the erection of walls round the premises, levelling the ground, a change in the mode, or an extension of the limits of the original plan; interest of money borrowed during the time

that the debt was unliquidated, and various other demands, till it amounted to a sum of not less than seven thousand pounds: all of which, with comparatively few exceptions, has been raised by those connected with the present place of worship.

The benefits arising from the erection of this edifice have been numerous and large. It has afforded an opportunity for a greater number than before was possible, especially amongst the poor, to listen to the good tidings of great joy: by these, many have been sustained under the sorrows of life; prepared for its safe and peaceful termination, and have entered into rest: many more, under the same gracious influence, are looking to the same happy end, who, but for the erection of this edifice, might have been wanderers on the barren mountains of spiritual ignorance, or entangled in the labyrinths of error and vice. "If any do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he that converteth a sinner from the error of his ways, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

The reader, whatever his religious denomination, may trace in the review of these transactions, the

visible hand of God. It was his Spirit that first excited the desire for the object: that expanded the heart of his servants in liberality, that produced a favourable coincidence of circumstances;—that bound the hearts of those engaged in it, "in the unity of the spirit and the bonds of peace;" and that thus has brought the important undertaking to so happy a close. Apart from his influence, without whom nothing is holy, nothing is strong, the edifice in question would have realized the sarcastic declaration of Tobiah, the Ammonite, in reference to the re-building of the holy city. "Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall."* If the heathen were accustomed to inscribe on their temples, "to God, the great and good," we, as the professors of a purer faith, would gratefully write on these walls, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name, give glory for thy mercy and thy truth's sake."

In the year 1821, the present pastor, feeling his health affected by the exertion of preaching three ser-

* Nehemiah, iv. 3.

mons each Lord's-day, efforts were made, by procuring occasional supplies, for the afternoon service, to relieve him, in some degree, from the weight of ministerial labour. The difficulty of obtaining the required assistance, not only produced considerable inconvenience to those upon whom the duty of making arrangements for that object devolved, but, also, to the congregation at large, by the uncertainty of the supply. This fact, having engaged the attention of Mr. Bullar, he, in a characteristic spirit of disinterested devotedness, and in order to obviate the existing difficulties, made a spontaneous offer, to the following effect, which was contained in a letter, addressed by him, to the assembled church, in November, 1821. "If Mr. Adkins, in the first instance, and the church afterwards, shall perfectly concur in approving of my proposition, I offer, as an experiment, for three months, to conduct the afternoon service, either by reading a sermon, or by delivering a familiar exposition of the Assembly's Catechism: the whole service to be comprised in one hour." Mr. Bullar having been for many years an honorable member and deacon of the church, of spotless reputation for piety and

morality, of a conciliatory spirit, and of talents and learning, which, as having been successfully brought to trial, in the education of youth, left no doubt as to his intellectual and spiritual qualifications, his generous proposition was, in consequence, thankfully accepted; and in pursuance of this he was solicited, by a vote of the church, to undertake the service in question. The result of this incipient measure may be gathered from the following resolution, passed unanimously, at a public meeting of the church, on the first day of March, 1822. "That the term of three months having expired, which Mr. Bullar proposed, as a term of experiment for delivering his exposition of the Assembly's Catechism, on the afternoon of the Lord's-day; it is resolved, that the church feel deeply obliged by his past acceptable and useful services, and earnestly request him to continue the same; upon which they pray that the divine blessing may rest,

"*(Signed)* Thomas Adkins,

"Pastor and Chairman."

This service, thus generously offered, and cordially accepted, and which commenced by the proposal to give

an exposition of the Assembly's Catechism, has since been extended to a highly instructive and interesting view of the most important subjects, comprehended within the range of revealed truth; and still continues to be performed with unabated devotion and ability on the one side; and to be received, with no less of attachment, satisfaction, and profit, on the other, to the present time. The author feels himself compelled, though it may be at the risk of offending that modesty, a virtue not the least apparent amongst those that adorn the character of his endeared friend, to offer, thus publicly, as a minister and a man, a tribute of grateful respect to the piety, disinterestedness, and zeal, which have produced services so lengthened in their duration, and beneficial in their effects.

Opposed, as it is, to the feelings of the author to advert, thus publicly, to events which so intimately relate to himself; yet, as employed in forming a compendium of facts, for the instruction of future members of the church, he cannot allow them to pass unrecorded. In the autumn of the year 1831, the health of the pastor became seriously affected, principally, by exertions made whilst travelling in Scotland,

as the advocate of the London Missionary Society. The indisposition, thus produced, continued and increased; till he was utterly disqualified for the performance of even a part of his pastoral duties, and was compelled to retreat into privacy. This afflictive dispensation of providence, served as an occasion for calling forth, to a greater extent, the long tried and faithful attachment of the church and congregation to himself. All that unwearied activity and christian love could effect, especially on the part of Messrs. Bullar, Fletcher, and E. Randall, who sustained the office of deacons in the church, was attempted; either as it related to the mitigation of his own sufferings, by the most delicate expressions of christian sympathy, or to the supply of his lack of public service, by the most efficient aid. For nearly two years, was this trial continued; in which the faith and patience of him who suffered, and the love and sympathy of those who suffered with him, were put to the test. During this protracted period, through the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit, this christian society, bound alone by the principles of their common faith, were preserved from internal disorganization. Union was unbroken, peace was

unremoved, and a generous attachment to their suffering pastor, was neither alienated by his absence, nor quenched by lapse of time. An intimation on his part, proceeding from a feeling of conscientiousness, of a wish to relinquish that office, the duties of which he could not fulfil, was promptly met, and firmly resisted. "Prayer was made for him continually," in private and public, and not merely at the regular periods of devotional convocation, but at stated meetings for that specific object; a practice of intercessory prayer, it may be added, which was also not confined to themselves, and which, besides being extended to other churches, was especially observed by those composing the "Hampshire Association," as the result of a resolution to that effect, made at one of their public meetings. When some indications of returning health, held out a prospect of his eventual recovery, the pastor was invited, by a unanimous vote of the church, accompanied by a letter penned at their request by the deacons, and most affectionately expressed, in which he was solicited to quit his retirement, in a distant part of the country, and to resume his oversight of them in the Lord. At

length, when faith and hope began to fail, "He that heareth prayer," granted the request of his servants; and their minister, contrary to all reasonable expectation, and by a series of providential occurences, was restored to his former state of health, and his wonted habits of pastoral exertion. The author feels that he would stand exposed to a charge of ingratitude were he to allow such an occasion to pass without acknowledging the deep and lasting obligation under which he is laid, for those unequivocal indications of christian regard so undeserved on his part, and so widely diffused and warmly expressed on the part of others: also, especially to that wisdom, prudence, and fidelity, evinced by the deacons through this trying dispensation of Providence, and which were so eminently beneficial to the interests of the church for which they acted, and so consolatory to the mind of its afflicted pastor. Whilst, likewise, he would devoutly ascribe to the source of divine influence all that concurred to bring this series of events to a result so beneficial, yet, may he be permitted to observe, that, the facts referred to, are a practical exposure of the fallacy of those

assertions, in which it is maintained, that churches, constituted on congregational principles, are not only isolated from communion, in general, with the commonwealth of Christ, but that they are, individually, only a mass of disjointed materials, without any cement of union or foundation for durability: and that on the other hand, they evince, that where those principles are acted upon, in all their genuine import, and sacred requirements, they serve to develop the finest elements of the christian character, to produce a sympathy of feeling, deeply seated and widely spread; and to give to the churches in which they prevail, a cohesiveness and permanency, which will in vain be sought for, where others of a contrary nature are substituted for them, or they are thrown into the shade by neglect. The general and past records of this church may, likewise, serve, with the facts just referred to, as an additional proof of the cordial attachment and permanent union subsisting, generally, in such communities, between the minister and his flock. By a reference to them it will be seen that from the passing the act of ejectment in 1662, to the present time, a period of 174 years, this church

has had but six successive pastors, affording an average to each pastorate of nearly thirty years: and as one of that number, the Rev. Mr. Bertram, was resident only about eleven years, if his name, and the time he occupied, be subtracted from the general statement, it will leave an average of nearly three and thirty years to each of the remaining pastors. This durability of connection, it should be added, so far from being singular, is the rule rather than the exception, in the history of congregational churches, unless where a rupture of it is effected by the irresistible laws of mortality.

CHAP. IV.

General and concluding remarks—The Congregational system adapted for maintaining the purity and integrity of divine truth, and for extending the kingdom of Christ—Efficiency of the voluntary principle—The obligation to investigate, to maintain, and, in a becoming spirit, to diffuse the principles of protestant nonconformity—These principles, conducive to the formation of personal religion, but are not to be confounded with it.

The writer feels that he should not do justice to the subject, which is thus presented to the public, were he not to subjoin, to the preceding disquisitions and narrative, a few general remarks. He is ready to confess that nonconformity would be but a name; and its advocates would "so fight as one that beateth the air," did it not serve, to a most important extent, the cause of revealed truth. Viewed in this light, and as a practical question, it is of indescribable moment; and from long-continued reflection, the writer is disposed to accord with the statement of the candid, learned, and pious Dr. Doddridge, "that it is not merely the cause of a

distinct party, but of truth, honor, and liberty; and, in a great measure, the cause of serious piety too."

The preceding facts and reasonings, justify the assertion, that the system of ecclesiastical discipline, obtaining amongst the churches of Christ, of the Independent denomination, is more adapted than any other for the preservation of the purity of scripture truth. By the truth is understood, that class of doctrines, which distinguish christianity from every other form of religion, and impress upon it a character peculiarly its own: christianity, not as a mere republication of the law of nature, but as a remedial and restorative system; and that, not solely as it reveals the only method of pardon and acceptance, but as it lays, also, a firm foundation for the exercise of the christian virtues, by the promised agency of the spirit of God: by it, in one word, is intended "the truth as it is in Jesus." Various have been the methods which have been resorted to, by the prospective sagacity of those who were invested with influence in spiritual affairs, to perpetuate that class of religious opinions which comports with the general representation which has thus been given. The

most common, and perhaps the least effectual, has been the creation of a formulary of faith, an assent to which has been induced by the infliction of civil penalties, on the one side, or, the conferring of immunities, on the other. Against this method, many and serious objections must exist. It is beyond the power of human ingenuity to devise such a form of words as will be viewed, by every one who subscribes to it, in precisely the same light. From a diversity in their mental constitution, in bodily temperament, or early associations, or educational habits, causes too numerous to be specified, and impossible, perhaps, to be effectually removed,—men will think differently, if they think at all; and to hope for a perfect uniformity in our modes of thought, is as visionary as to expect an universal similarity in the features of our face. That men, under such circumstances, should be required, on pain of civil penalties, to subscribe to articles of human fabrication;—that their opinions should be stretched on a Procruste's bed, elongated if too short, and shortened if too long,—is a method of securing agreement in doctrine the absurdity of which is repugnant to reason,

whilst its impiety shocks the conscience. This mode is likewise as ineffectual as it is unreasonable. Some who subscribe will, in the mean time, if they reflect at all, affix their own ideas to the different parts of this formulary, which may, or may not, comport with the orthodox acceptation of the terms: others, like Paley, whose principles of expediency prepared him for such a step, may affix their signature to the doctrines merely as articles of peace: whilst a third class, who believe without evidence, and approve without discrimination, may, by one sweeping act, declare their unfeigned assent and consent to all and every part. But where, in the mean time, is scripture truth? It is in vain to point to the formulary and say that it is there. Truth is the result of a mental operation, the effect of an ordinary course of ratiocination, of calm, deliberate, conscientious approval; and, for the purposes of practical utility, it must exist in the mind. It cannot be said to live in mere articles of faith: on the contrary, there, arranged in precise order, embalmed with public honors, and lodged in its depositary, it may lie for ages, as unnoticed, and as dead, as a

body in a mausoleum. Thus, as in the church of Geneva, the *form* of truth may remain when the *spirit* is departed: and when this result is produced, heresy will arise, as it has done in that instance, to mangle the very form in which it was embalmed: or, as in the ecclesiastical establishment of England, the painful spectacle may be exhibited of sentiments, endlessly diversified in their mode, and directly opposed in their character, yet all professed and propagated by those who worship in the same temple, subscribe to the same creed, and belong professedly to the same church. These remarks are made, not with caustic severity, but in sadness of heart: made—not with reference to the men who thus subscribe, many of whom are the lights of the world, and the salt of the earth, but to the system itself, so erroneous in its constitution and deleterious in its effects. And they *are* thus made because bystanders are led, by this disgraceful spectacle, to imagine, either that there is no distinction between truth and error, or no importance to be attached to that distinction; and thus the cause of divine truth is betrayed: or, what may be no less injurious, in

beholding men of sentiments, diametrically opposite, subscribing the same articles of faith, an incurable suspicion may be excited, respecting the sincerity and integrity of the christian ministry itself; and thus religion is wounded in the house of her friends.

If the question be proposed, what are the most effectual means, under the agency of the divine spirit, without which all must be unavailing, for the preservation of evangelical truth, I would answer, they are to be found in the principles and practices of congregational nonconformity. On these principles, a body of men, constituting a church, and who, from the very mode of their admission to its privileges, must first obtain, and then assign, a reason of the hope that is in them; possessing also, the records of inspiration in their hands, and having no interest in ought but truth, are banded together for the purposes of mutual edification. That such a body should adopt, as the accredited expositor of the inspired volume, a man, whose sentiments substantially agree with their own, is as natural as any elective process that may exist amongst the chemical affinities of the material world. The minister, thus chosen, enlarges

the conceptions of the members of the church, by a clear and faithful exhibition of the truths of the sacred volume, and constant appeals to its authority. They, on the other hand, accustomed to refer his opinions to the only recognized standard, mark any deviations from it with early attention, watch them with conscientious earnestness; and thus, by a beneficial reaction, between minister and people, truth is elicited, understood, and preserved. These are the principles and practices of congregational nonconformity—these, alone, are adapted to man as an intelligent being, and to christianity as a *system* of intelligence: these, alone comport with the reiterated command to take heed *what* we hear; *how* we hear; to *try* the spirits, and prove the spirits: and these possess a conservative power in the maintenance and perpetuation of divine truth, which, in no artificial adjustments, can possibly be found. It was thus that the churches of the Waldenses and Albigenses preserved the light of evangelical religion, amidst the surrounding darkness of popery: it was thus that the congregational churches of Britain, maintained the steady equable flame of divine truth, through several succes-

sive reigns; during which time, the ministers of the endowed church, were, for the greater part, occupied either in a defence of the outworks of christianity, or in the inculcation of a spiritless system of morals:—it was thus, we speak it not with unhallowed complacency, that the distinguishing doctrines of the reformation, justification by faith alone, and the necessity of regeneration by the Holy Spirit, when banished from the pulpits in this town, and, with very few exceptions, kept from thence for generations in succession, existed, in unmixed purity, and unbroken continuation, in the church of which this is the memorial: and thus, too, the incontrovertible fact, that, whilst within the precincts of a church, that boasts of its uniformity, and of its articles as having secured that object, there may be seen all the colours and shades of opinion, visibly marked, Arminians —Calvinists — Supra-lapsarians — Sub-lapsarians— Millenarians — Irvingites— Arians—Socinians—and even it is possible, as in the case of the late Lord Bristol, bishop of Derry, an infidel in lawn sleeves:—there does exist, on the other hand, amongst the accredited ministers of the Independent denomination,

from whom no subscription to articles is required, so firm an *adherence* to the truth, as that not one has been seduced from it, by the "lying spirits" that have gone abroad in the present times: and so remarkable *an agreement* as to what constitutes its very essence, that, allowing for minor and unimportant distinctions, which will always exist amongst those who think for themselves, the faith of one may truly be said to represent the faith of the whole. The charges, sometimes brought against the nonconformist churches in England, as having relapsed into the errors of Socinianism, are altogether inapplicable to those of a congregational order. The author is not aware that even one of that denomination has sunk into this heresy: those that have been so lamentably affected by it were, in their original constitution, he believes, without exception, Presbyterian.

The brief memorial of this church will, also, furnish an argument, from fact, of the efficiency of a system of voluntary co-operation for the support and extension of the means of religion. It is with a view to illustrate the import, and confirm the truth of the preceding remark, that the author requests attention

to the following objects of christian benevolence, advanced and supported, either in whole or part, by the members of which this church and congregation are composed. In addition to their voluntary contributions for the maintenance of the christian ministry—and to their subscriptions, amounting, as has been stated, to nearly seven thousand pounds, for the erection of a new and spacious place of worship, there are funds raised from the same sources for the support of—

I. The Sunday School Society: which, during the last eight years, has employed, on an average, eighty gratuitous teachers, of both sexes, extending the benefits of religious instruction to, also, an average number of eight hundred and ninety one children, in the town, and some of the neighbouring villages, every Lord's-day.

II. Collections and subscriptions to the London Missionary Society.

III. Annual Collections and Subscriptions for the Hants Association of Independent Churches and Ministers, to extend the gospel through those parts of the county most destitute of spiritual instruction.

IV. Collections and Subscriptions, for the Irish

Evangelical Society, for the purpose of diffusing the gospel in Ireland, made almost every year.

V. Annual Subscriptions, for the Home Missionary Society.

VI. A Christian Instruction Society, consisting of about sixty visitors, for the purpose, principally, of the weekly circulation of religious books and tracts, which, as all are purchased from the parent society, in Paternoster-row, supported by members of all religious denominations are, consequently, unmarked by any sectarian bias.

VII. A Good Samaritan Society, for the purpose of visiting, through the medium of approved agents, the sick poor at their own abodes, to bestow pecuniary aid, and offer christian counsel.

VIII. A Female Friendly Society, constituted for a similar object with the former, the visitors of which are, for the greater part, aged and pious females.

IX. A Dorcas Society, supported *almost entirely*, by the Ladies of the congregation, to provide pecuniary aid, and to grant the loan of suitable articles of clothing to females, of approved character, during the period of their confinement in childbirth.

X. A Working and Clothing Society, to assist the poor in providing themselves with useful wearing apparel, and which articles are made by the ladies, who are members of the society, meeting periodically, at each other's houses, in rotation, for that object.

XI. A Library, consisting of eight hundred volumes of the most useful and approved authors, in Theology, Natural and Moral Science, History, and Biography. The books composing this, have been, either presented as donations by different individuals—or purchased by voluntary subscriptions, or by funds from the general receipts of the congregation. They are selected by the minister and deacons, who are, *ex officio*, trustees of the Library. The benefits of it are open to any subscriber, at the moderate sum of one shilling and three-pence per quarter.

XII. Annual subscriptions for Highbury College, one of the institutions for the education of young men, for the work of the ministry, amongst the Independents.

XIII. Collections for the Royal British Free Schools, for boys and girls, established in this town.

XIV. Annual collection for aged and infirm ministers, who may stand in need of pecuniary aid.

XV. Subscriptions for the British and Foreign Bible Society.

XVI. Frequent collections, or subscriptions, to aid in the erection or enlargement of places of worship, in other towns, and also for many other objects of christian benevolence.—The author begs to repeat the declaration, that the preceding statements are made, not with a view of exciting a feeling, incompatible with christian humility, on the part of those who have been engaged in these objects, nor with the desire or expectation of obtaining the meed of human applause; but for the purpose of evincing the inextinguishable vigour of the principles of the New Testament, when left to their unfettered operation. These efforts, to advance the religion, morality, and happiness of the community have not, it should be remembered, cost the government of the country the *smallest fraction of pecuniary support:* they have been made by a religious society, but few of whose members can lay a claim to the possession of wealth, and who, in addition to their cheerful contributions

to these several objects of christian benevolence, have paid, in common with their conforming fellow-subjects, their quota of support to *a system of ecclesiastical polity, from which they conscientiously dissent*. What has thus been effected by one voluntary church, has, in its measure, been accomplished by others in this town: and what has been done by the voluntary churches in Southampton, has been achieved, more or less, by all of the same character, through Great Britain at large: laying, not only the legislature of the land, but every participant in the benefits of social order, under a debt of obligation to them, the denial of which, would be equally futile and unjust. Notwithstanding, therefore, the unsparing ridicule which has been cast upon the voluntary principle, and the attempts which have been made, from the conclusions of reason and the evidence of fact, to disprove its efficiency, the writer is prepared to maintain, that it is the only one recognized in the pages of eternal truth—consonant with the spirit and genius of christianity—adapted to the mental and moral constitution of man, and that will, eventually, be effectual, under a supernatural in-

fluence, to carry the blessings of the gospel to the bounds marked out for their extension, by the prophetic language of inspiration. Viewing the subject in the various lights in which it should be contemplated, it seems to be one of the most irresistible of all conclusions that the time will arrive, and even now is at the door, when the world will be utterly astonished that any other means could have been used for this end, by the perverted ingenuity of man. Awaking from the spell which has been cast upon the public mind, by the spirit of secular forms of religion, so long established, so deeply rooted, and so widely diffused, it will appear, to the more enlarged and enlightened views of mankind, that to employ compulsory measures to diffuse the etherial religion of the gospel, would be as visionary and misapplied as to attempt the fabrication of some mechanical contrivance to grasp and control an unembodied spirit. It will, in one word, be seen, universally, what is now perceived by a large and increasing number, that there is no adaptation of the means to the end.

If the sacred volume, by authority and precedent,

is to decide the question, the decision is already made, since from its commencement to its close, no reference is made to a compulsory mode of support. Even under the jewish theocracy, a form of religion from which the advocates of that system derive their strongest arguments, all was voluntary and free. The tithes paid by the people, and the offerings made by the priests, were secured by no temporal penalty, and the neglect of the one or the other, was not considered as a civil, but a religious offence. The humbler tabernacle in the wilderness, and the costly temple on Mount Zion, were alike reared by donations, that sprung from grateful hearts, and were presented by willing hands. Respecting the former, the command went forth, "Whosoever is of a *willing* heart, let him bring it an offering of the Lord;" and in reply to this appeal, "they came every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made *willing;* and they brought the Lord's offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for all his service, and for the holy garments. And they came, both men and women, as many as were *willing-hearted*, and brought bracelets

and ear-rings, and rings and tablets, and all jewels of gold. The children of Israel brought a *willing* offering unto the Lord, every man and woman whose heart made them *willing* to bring."* When the temple also was to be reared, no compulsory measures were resorted to; no tax was levied to extort the grudged contribution from reluctant hands: the sovereign gave first of his own proper good, of gold and silver, and then proclaimed to others, "who is *willing* to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord. Then the chief of the fathers, and princes of the tribes of Israel, and the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the rulers over the king's work, *offered willingly*. Then the people rejoiced, for that they *offered willingly*, because with perfect heart they *offered willingly* to the Lord. This voluntary offering filled the heart of the aged monarch with such hallowed joy, that he could not forbear to exclaim, "Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so *willingly* after this sort, for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee."†

* Exodus xxxv. 5, 21, 22, 29. † 1 Chron. xxix, 5, 6, 9, 14.

If it is in vain to search for a precedent for compulsory support from the theocracy of the old Testament, it is evident to a demonstration, that it cannot be found in the spirit and practice of the new. If ever there were a period when it might have been anticipated that the supreme Head of the church would have sanctioned such a procedure, on the ground of expediency, it must have been whilst the christian religion was in its infantile state. He "with whom is the residue of the spirit," would, on this principle, have arrested, by the power of truth, the heart of him who sat in the throne of temporal power, and from thence descended, through all the gradations of rank, to the illiterate and poor. The opposite line of conduct adopted by infinite wisdom, is a practical refutation, from the highest authority, at once, of the plausible doctrine of expediency, and the unwarranted practice of compulsion. Twelve men, comparatively low in their situation in life, destitute of wordly influence, were commissioned to preach the gospel in opposition to the passions and prejudices of the world. They had to contend with institutions dazzling in splendour, venerable in anti-

quity, and imposing in power. The hostility of the multitude was leagued with the authority of government to retard the progress of these fishermen of Galilee, and to frustrate their designs. But in the name and by the authority of Jesus of Nazareth they went on. With no other arts than those of lawful persuasion, with no other arms than the cross, they beat down the strong holds of superstition, and drove the priests in trepidation from the falling shrine. Mightily grew the word and prevailed: commencing in India, small as a stream which the traveller might dry up with his foot, it was gradually swollen, by tributary currents, till it became a majestic river, conveying life and fertility wherever it flowed. Ere a century had elapsed, the gospel had spread from Ethiopia to India: from Britain to Japan; and the progress before a second had passed away, was so much increased, that Tertullian, pleading for christians, before the Roman senate, could boldly declare that the number of them was so great that were they to withdraw themselves into some remote part, the insignificant remainder would tremble at the solitude in which they were left.

The progress of christianity afforded a sublime spectacle to the world: it was the simple majesty of truth, triumphing over inveterate prejudices, corrupt passions, and fatal error: and had there been superadded to the means employed, the imposing apparatus of civil power, christianity would have been degraded by this factitious honor and weakened by its proffered support: one of the strongest arguments for its truth would have been lost; and the sophistical Gibbon might have added a solution for the fact of the early, extensive, and rapid diffusion of the christian religion, on human principles, infinitely more plausible than any which he has assigned.

It is in vain to object to the force of this conclusion, that, the primitive christians had the ability to work miracles, since the power involved in this order of means was not of the character of a compulsory support, but purely of a *moral nature;* affording to the mind of the spectator a proof of the divine origin and unquestionable truth of christianity: and as the strength of this species of evidence does not diminish with the lapse of time, it should be remembered, that it remains in unimpaired vigour down to the present

time, rendering, in the same degree, all coercion in religion, unnecessary and misplaced.

Such the religion of Christ appeared, for the first three centuries after it lighted upon this globe. Constantine, at length, took the cause into his imperial hands, and blended civil and religious power. From that period, what it gained in external splendour, it lost in moral purity and strength: reason was hood-winked, conscience was fettered, and the lovely simple form of christianity was tricked off in the meretricious attire of the mother of harlots. It must be allowed, that, anterior to that unnatural alliance, the character of religion was deteriorated by many debasing associations: the intermixture, with the sublime mysteries of revelation, of errors, borrowed from the Alexandrian school of philosophy—the spirit of pomp and pride, which began early to appear, after the apostolic age, in the official members of the church, and which attained to a fearful elevation—the genius of persecution, which induced synods, composed of pastors of churches, to call in the aid of the civil power, to propagate the tenets of one party, and to suppress those of another—the cor-

rupt incorporation of pompous official distinctions, and superstitious observances, with the simple institutions of the new testament:—but, making every reasonable abatement on these grounds, from the excellence of the character of the religion of those times, it must be obvious to every candid mind, that it possessed and evinced a freshness and vigour; a versatility in the application of appropriate means, and a steady ardour in the prosecution of its benevolent designs, which will, in vain, be sought for, after a different system of support was supplied. *Before* that event it moved unencumbered, and instinct with life; receiving strength from the very means used to crush it, and gathering the laurels of victory, even from defeat: *after* that event, it appears cramped and crippled, dishonoured by its splendour, crushed by the weight of its ornaments; till its very spirit was extinguished; leaving in its place, a shrouded and gaudy, but not less loathsome corpse. Such the religion of the state continued to be in every country in christendom till the era of the reformation. That event was nothing more than the native and insuppressible energy of eternal truth, acting upon intelli-

gent and conscientious minds, inducing them to throw off the superincumbent mass of errors, by which religion was pressed down, to break the fetters by which she was trammelled, and to restore her to her native vigour, and her pristine form. The reformation was produced *alone on the principles which we now advocate*, and none can deny the efficiency, or impugn the excellence of the one, without casting a corresponding reflection on the other.

If facts are to be decisive of the truth of the question at issue, may there not be a triumphant appeal to the phenomena that mark the moral history of the present era. If brighter days begin to dawn upon the universal church, and the long-desired apocalypse of ancient prophecy unfolds itself in scenes "surpassing fable, and yet true," to what, under providence, it may be asked, is this result to be attributed, but to the increasing development and application of *the voluntary principle*. This principle, pervading like a leaven, all denominations, has infused into the once inert mass of religious profession, the living energy of truth: affecting not those the least who in theory are most disposed to deny its efficiency. That

institutions have arisen in this country, so vast as to embrace, in the amplitude of their benevolent designs, the aggregate population of the globe, and so minute, as to descend to the remotest nook, in which ignorance, misery, and guilt retire to die, is to be attributed, in their first origin, and their subsequent support, to the operation of the voluntary principle. If the ray of instruction has been poured on the benighted minds of millions of the youthful poor in this and foreign lands: if the chain has been removed from the once manacled limbs of the African slave, and he walks forth in the privileges of civil and religious liberty,—if the seal is removed from the records of eternal truth, and its hallowed pages are spread before the astonished view of millions of the heathen, who are thus enabled to read in their own tongue the wonderful works of God—if from the various institutions for evangelical missions, the church missionary society included in this number, messengers are seen flying, like the apocalyptic angel, in the midst of the heavens having the everlasting gospel to preach to all nations, these effects are to be attributed alone to the vigorous operation of the same

principle elicited by the spirit of God, in the heart of his worshippers, and applied to heavenly things. In one word, were we to subtract from the amount of moral good, attempted, or accomplished, in the present day, that which is effected by this same principle, either in its direct mode of operation, or by its reflex acts, the residuum would be a fraction too small to compute: and on the other side, there would be presented an unremoved mass of ignorance, sin, and woe, which the hardiest defender of the compulsory system could not contemplate without dismay.

That the voluntary principle has accomplished no more, in the maintenance and propagation of divine truth, is not to be attributed to any defect existing in itself; but to the antagonistic system with which it has had to contend. For more than fifteen centuries a compulsory power has been employed in Christendom, which, in addition to its *direct* consequences evinced in the numberless acts of ferocious persecution and intolerant oppression, has generated prejudices, which have at once pervaded and divided all ranks of society, extinguished the spontaneous efforts of christian benevolence, and thrown a withering blight over

the whole. That christianity has outlived the influence of such means is only to be attributed, under God, to the inextinguishable nature of that very principle which many so severely reprobate, but so little understand. A higher and better order of things the author believes is, by the copious effusion of the Spirit of God, about to dawn upon the universal church. Under the bland but irresistible power of truth, the frost and fret-work of secular establishments of religion, in which hardness is substituted for durability, and glittering show for real grandeur, will be gradually melted away. All that is really valuable, in such institutions, will remain, to act in harmony, and blend in character, with the general scene. Devoted and faithful heralds of the truth, of which there are now so many, and the numbers of which will then be much increased, will occupy a higher position in public estimation,—not standing forth as the feed and mercenary stipendiaries of a temporal government, but on the vantage ground which apostles and primitive pastors trod, where, what they lose in earthly pomp and wealth, they will gain in moral dignity and influence. Worldly-minded

and ungodly ministers, who now offer, unmolested, their "strange fire," then, unsupported by the adventitious props of a secular arm, will sink from the scene, like the company of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, leaving the camp more pure, and the cause more powerful, in the same proportion as their numbers, by such means will be decreased. The wounds which now reach to the very vitals of society, and *which are produced almost exclusively* by contentions relating to ecclesiastical establishments, will then be healed. Society, no longer divided into two great sections, incorporated and privileged, or tolerated and oppressed, viewing each other with "jealous eye, malign," will, by the removal of that which has afforded nourishment to the spirit of haughty domination, or grasping cupidity, in the former; or of servile submission, or irritated and irritating resistance in the latter, be bound together in the bonds of peace. "Ephraim shall not envy Judah; and Judah shall not vex Ephraim." The members of the universal church, thrown upon their individual responsibility, by the most weighty and winning motives, will answer to the appeal, in principles more elevated,

sentiments more generous, and liberality more diffuse. The learned, instead of being employed in exhausting efforts, either to entrench themselves more deeply within the line of their own sectarian division, or to force the intrenchments of their opponents, will collect the stores of literature, and emit the splendours of genius, to establish, illustrate, and extend the principles of truth and righteousness. The wealthy, instead of limiting their contributions to the general weal, according to the grudged quota of a legalized demand, will pour out an affluence of supply, more proportioned alike to their obligations and their means. The intellectual, moral, and *pecuniary* resources of the church, will thus be much increased. Religion will not be viewed as a mere appendage to the state, to justify its oppressions, and sanction its abuses, by which, more than by any other exciting cause, infidelity has been generated, and diffused; but will lodge an irresistible conviction in the consciences even of the profane, of its divine origin, and solemn requirements. Man, having no interest but in the attainment of truth, will search for it in all the walks of literature, and especially in its own proper field,

the pages of holy writ. Infidelity will be vanquished, and error dispelled. "The righteous shall see it and rejoice, and all iniquity shall stop her mouth." The different sections of the universal church, no longer wasting their energies, and exasperating their spirits, by attacks upon each other; will have time and inclination to go forth, in one concentrated enterprise, upon the surrounding empire of ignorance, crime, and woe; and the church of Christ, itself, which has so long struggled through the darkness of a partial eclipse, "will look forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."

That such views of the efficacy of this principle, when it is worked out, in all its resources, and sanctified by the spirit of God, are not visionary, will appear evident from the experiments which have already been made, on a large scale, in the new world. Let the following testimonies, from the narrative of the visit made by Drs. Reid and Matheson, as a deputation to the American churches; and which are selected from a mass of corresponding evidence, be duly weighed. "In Virginia, the Episcopal

church was established by law. The law was tried in both its forms; without the toleration, and afterwards with the toleration, of other sects. For nearly a century, it was the exclusive religion of the State; it was endowed, and all parties were compelled to contribute to its support. The consequence was any thing but what a good Episcopalian would desire. Unworthy and incompetent men, in search of respectability or emolument, made the church a prey. Having nothing to apprehend from the people, or the rivalry of sects, they became careless, and indolent, and frequently dissolute. The statements on this subject abound, and are most painful. The pastors generally neglected the people, and the people despised and forsook the pastors; so that the system was dead, even while it retained the visible forms of existence.

"It was then tried with toleration. This alteration admitted the other sects to enter the state; and without direct hinderance, to labour for the instruction and salvation of the people. The privileged clergy, however, despised their rivals: and as all sects were still taxed for their benefit, it concerned them little

by what name they were called; and they continued to repose on their supplies, in indolence and security. If they slept, the oppressed sectaries did not sleep. Their efforts were not in vain: and these, with the reckless negligence of the endowed party, and the changes effected by the Revolution, prepared the State for an improved method.

"It was felt that all could no longer be made to support one; and it was proposed that all should be assessed for the benefit of all the denominations. This, however, was declined: the Dissenting bodies protesting most nobly against any participation in the benefit of such a tax. Finding them firm in the rejection of all State allowance, an act was passed in 1775, to relieve them from all contributions towards the support of the established religion: and, eventually, the whole question was disposed of, and the whole country satisfied, by placing all denominations on one footing: by knowing them only as civil corporations, and withholding all allowance.

"As quickly after this as the circumstances would allow, the Episcopal church revived, and placed itself on equal terms with its compeers. To this time it

has continued to advance."—"The changes which have taken place have been various and gradual, but they were all in favour of the voluntary principle; and in the year 1833, only two years since, the last fragments of the compulsory and endowed system were demolished by the power of improved opinion and religious principle. This was done in Connecticut about fifteen years since, and in Vermont and New Hampshire about the same time."—"The voluntary principle, then, is the only one now for for the support of these churches. It has been tried in some states to the exclusion of every other; it has been tried in other states, for different periods of time, where every other has failed: and what is the result? Deliberately, but without hesitation, I say, *the result is in every thing, and every where, most favourable to the voluntary, and against the compulsory, principle.* Let us look at this, both as a matter of testimony, and as a matter of fact.

"*Testimony* is universally in its favour. Let me not be mistaken. Some may carp at the term universal, and endeavour to muster some few voices in favour of the Standing Order. Such voices are,

doubtless, to be heard, but it is truly marvellous that they are so few. Of course, the transition so lately effected from one system to the other, must have disturbed many interests, and have brought loss to some. It was to be expected that some, under the old system, would be incompetent: and these would naturally incline to an allowance from the state, rather than from the people, who would be too wise to grant it. Some, who had become grey and infirm under that system, might be supposed to cling to it, even though every advantage were with the change. Harvey showed his skill in metaphysics, as well as in physics, when he observed, that none of his profession above forty years of age received his theory, or were to be expected to receive it.

"But, in truth, though every reasonable mind would be ready to make considerable allowances for the influence of such causes, it was never less necessary; and they are only referred to, to prevent captious and unfair objection. After having invited the most candid opinion on the subject—after having sincerely sought for the truth, whether favourable, or unfavourable, to the voluntary system—and after

having sought this in every quarter, and chiefly where state provisions had been enjoyed,—I certainly did not find half a dozen men who would give their suffrages for the old method! The ministers, as a body, who might be supposed to have, professionally, strong preferences for a fixed and compulsory stipend, were united in their attachment to the voluntary principle. The brethren in Massachusetts, where the change had been so recently completed, rejoiced in it, and anticipated from it a decided advance in pure religion. Those of New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine, with whom we had an opportunity of meeting and conferring, were unanimous in the same judgment, and referred gratefully the renovated state of their churches, and of the ministry, to its benign influence. The brethren of Connecticut, whom we met in large numbers, decidedly concurred in the same opinion. The Episcopalian of Virginia, and the Congregationalist of New England, who had been indulged and protected to the utmost, were equally in favour of the new principle. Men of every denomination—the Methodist, the Baptist, the Presbyterian, the Reformed, the Lutheran, the Church-

man, and the Independent—all deprecate state interference, and state allowance. Men of every region —the East, the West, the North, the South—and who are most deeply concerned for the interests of religion, agree in coming to the same conclusion. Indeed, such unanimity of opinion, on a practical question, involving the interests of so many parties, and to be determined mostly by those whose habits and thoughts had been associated only with the old system, is what I never expected to find. It assured me of at least two things: 1. That the evil of this system must have been great indeed, and visible to all; and, 2, That these devoted men had wisdom enough, and piety enough, at once to resolve, that what was injurious to religion could not be beneficial to them."

"Then, *Fact* is unanimously in its favour. This submits a wide field to us, and the difficulty is, still to condense observation. Let me dispose, first of New England. It has undergone a most felicitous improvement since the alterations. I need not, I presume, enter into detail on this particular; for none will arise to contradict the assertion. The

standing Order could not have stood its ground as a state establishment, It was inert and inefficient; the Dissenting community on the one hand, and infidelity on the other, were prevailing against it: while within itself, was engendered the worst forms of heresy. It is now placed on a level with its rivals, and it is equal to the best in the race of excellence. Every form of orthodoxy has made a surprising start, and is sustaining it as it was begun. The ministry has been supplied with better men; the men have been better maintained. Churches have been revived where they languished, and they have been created in abundance where they did not exist."

To the preceding testimony, it is not improper to subjoin, that at the time this memorial is passing through the press, further proofs of, at once, the necessity, the growth, and the efficiency of this principle are afforded, in our own country, in the proposal to erect, by voluntary subscription, fifty new churches in the metropolis, and the munificent donations already made to that object.

The statements and disquisitions, contained in this volume, evince the obligation of those who may

honor its pages with a perusal, to investigate, candidly, patiently, and with prayer, the principles of protestant nonconformity; especially that form in which they appear in churches of the congregational order. It will then be seen, at least, that they are not the fancies of an ephemeral sect, variable as the wind, and fleeting as a vapour, but are embodied in the history of the most spiritual section of the universal church, from the apostolic age down to the present time. The questions involved in them are not, therefore, to be settled by a joke, or a sneer, by dogmatic assumptions, or unchristian invective and abuse; but by a dispassionate appeal to scripture reason and fact. These are the tests to which nonconformists desire their principles to be brought; and if they will not endure the searching trial they will readily abandon them, and be gainers by the renunciation, since they have no interest in any thing but truth. But if, on investigation, they prove to be true, those who adopt them are not only required to adhere to them with unyielding firmness, but to endeavour, by all scriptural means, to lodge them in the minds of others. Truth of every kind is

important, and those forms of it which relate to ecclesiastical polity, certainly, not the least so. Men are as accountable for the sentiments which they entertain, as for the actions which they perform, and they should be as careful that the one should accord with the architype contained in the records of eternal truth, as that the other should be regulated by the precepts of the decalogue, derived from the same source. They are no more at liberty to modify, on principles of human policy, the constitution of the church of Christ, than they are to change or mutilate the laws which God has enacted for the conduct of human life. For the *mode*, likewise, in which truth shall be investigated, men are as strictly amenable to the author of their existence, as they are for the sentiments which they may adopt; since the one will, invariably, have an influence upon the other. We are not at liberty to make our inclinations or ease, or the opinions of our fellow-men, the medium of arriving at the conclusion; but patient investigation, unprejudiced teachableness, humble deference to divine authority, and, above all, fervent prayer to the "Father of Lights," for his promised illumina-

tion. Truth, thus carefully sought after, must be as courageously obeyed, whatever consequences it may expose us to, or wherever it may lead the way. Our adoption of this line of conduct may subject us to much inconvenience, may, even, offend our tastes, and, apparently, oppose our worldly interests; but this is not a question of convenience, taste, or interest, but of uncompromising eternal truth. He, who in the search of it, sacrifices his prejudices to his judgment, his inclinations to his conscience, his temporal advantages to his christian duty, must, notwithstanding all that he is required to surrender, be a gainer to an incalculable extent. There may be arrayed against him, worldly policy, and worldly power; but there will be, on his side, truth and conscience, the approbation of the wise and good; the company of "the noble army of martyrs;" and the presence of the Son of God. Nor is such a line of conduct less indicative of real dignity of character, than it is in accordance with moral obligation. Little effort is required to float with the tide; but to dare to be singular, to swim *against* the stream, these require courage, resolution, strength: and when such

qualities are evinced on subjects of a religious nature, the general character being in accordance with them, they indicate a superiority, and in some instances a lofty elevation of mind. On the other side a servile yielding to public opinion, because our interests or ease are presumptively involved, betrays a meanness of soul, and eventually, costs the calculator much more than he gains.

In the application of this rule, relating to the investigation and adoption of truth, to the particular instance of it in view, the author prefers selecting the sentiments and language of one who has afforded a practical illustration of it in his own person: who was a beneficed clergyman of the church of Ireland, but who sacrificed his standing and interests in that establishment, to the demands of truth and conscience. In the conclusion of a pamphlet, in which he has assigned his reasons for secession, with the fidelity of unflinching principle, tempered with the spirit of christian love, he thus addresses his clerical brethren, and that on a subject which deserves their serious attention:—"I notice an argument which, with many, has as much weight as any other: but to which

comparatively little is due. I refer to that drawn from *expediency*. When subservient to principle, it is not without its value: but when it is not, then is it connected with infidelity and presumption, thinking that we can devise better than the Lord for the effecting his own purpose. The expediency is generally presented to us in this way: The greater good that may be effected in the Established Church—the increased opportunity of usefulness—the larger congregations, and the many more houses open to us, and the freedom from that prejudice which, among the members of the body, attaches more or less to those separating from her communion. Now, I believe, that any one giving himself to the service of God, will never have to complain of the want of opportunity of usefulness in a world of sinners, and in a world where the church is so low—no; he will find doors of usefulness ready for him, if he but lift his hand to open them: and I am sure my own experience abundantly shews me, that it is not of work that we are in want, but of labourers for the work. But even supposing that it was not so, are we to "do evil, that good may come?" I say evil, for such it

would be for me, or any one seeing the Establishment so contrary to God's mind as I do, to abide in it. I acknowledge that it is not so for one not seeing the evil, but then is he responsible for not examining; and I confess I know not how one can examine, and not discover it bound up in the system. I much doubt, if there be a truly godly minister in the Established Church, who has examined into the subject, without having his mind shaken on it. There may be many a one who has examined, now confirmed enough; because, whenever we slight any truth given to us, the progress is to insensibility on that given truth—there the Spirit is grieved; and thus do we find many of the clergy sitting comparatively easy under errors now, which but a few years hence they saw clear enough in their true character, and which then were galling enough to them; and this, I believe, is also at the root of the fearful high-churchism of some of the evangelical clergy in England, which, I believe, is creeping into this country also. It is a great thing to keep our conscience tender—sensitive to the touch of truth, and truth only; and here is the great failure with many—they do not

see the necessity of it. One tells me, that he sees many of the evils that I do in the Establishment, but that he must not mind his conscience! Another says, he knows the evil well enough, but that I should swallow it for the sake of the good I had the opportunity of doing. Why, really, this is to me amazing: what is it but to say, that God is in such need of our assistance, that he cannot carry on his work without us; nay, further, that he needs our temporising and tampering with principle to effect his purposes—that he rewards our disobedience. Now do I say in answer to all these expediency brethren, that no possible amount of good, even to the converting of ever so many souls, is to me an equivalent for the recognition and adoption even of one principle evil in itself. It is thoroughly dishonouring to God—it is taking the government of his church out of his own hands. He does not stand in need of our poor, dubious, double-minded ways to accomplish his will; and our simple duty should be to stand true to the principle he has given us, and leave the event without a fear or a doubt to him; and in so doing, let us see that we cast no hinderance in the way of one another,

because it may be that one follow not with us. It is very distressing to witness this poor sectarian feeling any where, preferring the honour of our little sect or system before our common Christianity; for truly, with pain do I say it, that the only hinderance I have encountered since my departure from the Establishment, has been from men of God in that Establishment—men, I do believe, whose objection to me might be thus expressed: "we forbade him, for he followed not with us." I would simply remind them of our Lord's reply."—He then turns to the spiritual lay members of the Established Church, whom he addresses in the following terms.

"It is very likely that these pages may come before one who has experienced in his soul the Lord's pardoning love, who knows that He is gracious, and whose desire is to serve Him, but who, not being in the ministry of the establishment, thinks himself free from the abuses to which the minister is more immediately committed as being the most prominent actor, and who, with this feeling, thinks he may abide in the establishment without injury to his own soul or dishonor to God. Now, I do believe that the guilt

of the layman, as he is called, is all one with that of the minister; he sanctions the system, he lends the weight of whatever influence, gift, or talent he may possess, to the upholding and accrediting the system which he acknowledges to be evil, for it is surprising what multitudes do so. He may, probably, be confirming others who may be too weak to act of themselves, and are looking to and following him as their guide, confirming them in a system hurtful to their souls' liberty and joy in the Lord: any dubious way in us may be the source of more evil than we can easily calculate. Then, dear brethren, in or out of the ministry, you who see the evil of the system, take heed how you confirm others in a course of disobedience; be decided, be no longer half-hearted to the Lord, but stand out in His holy name, in holy separation from every worldly system. True, indeed, you may expose yourself to the loss of credit, to the loss of worldly standing and individual importance, to privation, to evil tongues and evil motives—then, the more like our Lord and Master. Oh, if we would but follow Him closely, if we would but keep in mind the Christians standing and the Christians hope, it

would all be plain even as it would be easy to us, strangers and pilgrims here, then not in our home, then not seeking after this present evil world, it is not our rest, it is defiled. We seek a heavenly country; let this be ever before us, and let us remember the provision for the way, the exceeding great and precious promises—'I will recieve you, I will be a father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.' Doth the Almighty One so speak to us—then what should we fear?" *

Conducive, as are the forms of church government and order, advocated in this volume, to the advancement of religion, they are not, however to be confounded with religion itself. "The kingdom of God consisteth not in meats and drinks," in forms and ceremonies, nor even in correct views of doctrine and discipline; but in faith that works by love, in repentance that melts the heart, in holiness that regulates the life, "in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. To confound the means

* Reasons for Retiring from the Established Church. By Charles Hargrove, late Rector and Vicar of Kilmina, in the Diocese of Tuam.

with the end, on a question of this nature, is to expose ourselves to the most imminent peril: and that on a point where our eternal well-being is at stake. From the tendency to fall into this error, so common to mankind in general, let not the orthodox dissenter imagine that he is free. It is possible that he may substitute the form for the substance; correct opinions, on subjects of nonconformity, for "faith in Christ, and repentance towards God," and perish in his mistake: perish the more dreadfully, as his light may be clearer, and his consequent obligations more profound. The author feels, therefore, that he should have accomplished but little were he even to succeed in making one individual a speculative, dogmatic dissenter; if the heart of the convert were left, at the same time, a prey to unsubdued passions. The point at which, in this instance, as in the whole course of his pastoral career he would aim, is to employ the means prepared for him in the volume of inspiration, as subsidiary to the most important, because the only saving end. To lead the enquirer, first by a species of mental introversion to look into his own heart, that by a salutary, though painful,

discovery of its impurity and defilement, its wants, and its woe, he may afterwards be inclined, by an act of faith, to "behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world;" and then, "shewing his faith by his works," may "adorn the doctrine of God, our Saviour, in all things."

FINIS.

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